

Island Rewrites: Postcolonial Caribbean, British and Irish Revisions.

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Dissertation in Literature

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October 2018

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank the incredibly important people, without whom, this endeavour would have not been possible.

Firstly, to Dr. Jak Peake, for his support, guidance and invaluable insight into this research project.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my family, in particular to my parents, not only for their support during this Master's degree, but throughout my entire education. Without your unwavering encouragement and belief in me I would not be able to pursue this path. I am forever grateful for your wise counsel and willingness to proofread my countless pages. Finally, I would like to express my thanks to Finn, for continually surprising me with his endless patience, love and support throughout this project. Despite the challenges faced this year, I have been so lucky to have such a supportive network of friends and family to help me through the ups and downs of this research, and to always put everything in perspective. Thank you.

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the representation of the relationship between *coloniser* and *colonised* in Caribbean literature, through an exploration of texts that are re-workings of, responses to, and dramatic adaptations of European texts that form part of the colonial canon. This dissertation has as its background the overarching question of how literature, both European and Caribbean, has responded to significant events through history, and what part it has played in contributing to reconciliation, revolution and defining independent national identity, inclusive of the unique cultural and regional identity that is prevalent in the Caribbean. This dissertation is divided into three chapters organised along geographic lines. Within these sections analysis of the imitation and intertextuality between the original text and its Caribbean counterpart is explored. The analysis traces the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised and the ways in which social, cultural and political events shape and transform an artist's interpretation of this relationship. This dissertation is concerned with the concept of 'de-colonisation' and the varying approaches to achieving de-colonisation, through a return to pre-colonised language and culture, or through the embracing of hybridism and syncretism. To explore this concept, the discussion engages with postcolonial theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha, Frantz Fanon and Edward Said - as well as the extant body of literature that surrounds postcolonial studies - in order to investigate the occurrences of rewriting, response and adaptation, and the ways in which the postcolonial Caribbean works destabilise and dislodge the authority of 'colonial' canonical texts. Most notably, Chapter Two: *Ireland and The Caribbean: Shared History, Shared Words*, explores the relationship between the postcolonial nations of Ireland and the Caribbean. The texts considered in this chapter reveal the united by experience of colonialism and the 'kinship' felt by poets and playwrights that share aspects of culture, language and literature.

Introduction

Introduction

Within the field of postcolonial theory, terms such as ‘hybridity’, ‘creolization’ and ‘writing back’ have come to be affiliated with the fundamental ambivalence that lies at the core of the postcolonial project. This dissertation primarily deals with the latter term, and the well observed phenomenon of postcolonial Caribbean ‘writing back’, which is realised in the practice of rewriting, response and dramatic adaptation of works that form part of the ‘colonial canon’. The postcolonial Caribbean texts under investigation in this dissertation are all intrinsically connected to particular works from the English, and wider Western ‘canon’, these texts have been responded to, rewritten or adapted to stage with a view to restructure European ‘realities’ in postcolonial terms. That is not to say they are simply attempting to reverse the hierarchical orders, but to destabilise and interrogate the “philosophical assumptions on which that order was based”¹. To clarify the terminology employed in this dissertation, rewriting refers to the act of re-placing the language, characters and setting of a canonical text, whilst retaining the majority of the narrative in their new versions. Texts such as Mustapha Matura’s *Playboy of the West Indies* serve as a helpful example. Postcolonial responses, on the other hand, possess a greater independence from the canonical colonial text and primarily respond to themes, and issues within the text rather than creating an alternate version. Jean Rhys’s novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* is often hailed as an exemplary attack on the master narrative, *Jane Eyre*, upon which it is based.

Before exploring the occurrence of literatures that respond to colonial texts I must first briefly outline the contemporary critical matrix that underpins and informs my research. Homi K.

¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge 1989): 32.

Bhabha argues that the postcolonial moment is a 'transitory' site, "neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past"², the archetypal ambivalence of hybridised text and the creolised subject are a subversive force that undermines colonial authority because it is "not reducible to the coloniser's self-assured world-view"³. In this way, the postcolonial Caribbean writers under examination in this dissertation, such as Jean Rhys, Derek Walcott, Mustapha Matura and Aimé Césaire appropriate and reproduce the colonial texts, and write back to the colonial canon, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin argue in their seminal work *The Empire Writes Back*. It is their construction of a text that simultaneously resembles and does not resemble the original text, which characterises its ambivalent status as a hybrid or creolised text. It is this ambivalent status that calls into question the originality of the rewriting, and its ability to affect the perception of the original text that distinguishes postcolonial rewriting within the wider field of postcolonial literatures. Giles Deleuze echoes the "new horizons" of Bhabha's philosophy in his concept surrounding the two types of island, the Continental and the Oceanic, and continues:

Dreaming of islands... is dreaming of pulling away, of being already separate, far from any continent, of being lost and alone – or it is dreaming of starting from scratch, recreating, beginning anew. Some islands drifted away from the continent, but the island is also that toward which one drifts; the other islands originated in the ocean, but *the island is also the origin*, radical and absolute.⁴

This imagination of islands is characterised as presenting two tendencies, one towards separateness and the other a creative force, although the two are not mutually exclusive. Deleuze argues that this concept of the island is of "re-creation", not creation, not the beginning but the re-beginning, thus the "deserted island is the origin, but a second origin. From it

² Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge 1994).

³ Lorna Burns, *Contemporary Caribbean Writing and Deleuze: Literature Between the Postcolonialism and Post-Continental Philosophy*, (London: Continuum International Publishing: 2012): 67.

⁴ Lorna Burns, *Contemporary Caribbean Writing and Deleuze: Literature Between the Postcolonialism and Post-Continental Philosophy*, (London: Continuum International Publishing: 2012): 2.

everything must start anew”⁵. Deleuze’s philosophy of re-creation resonates with the postcolonial Caribbean literature of the twentieth- and twenty-first century, and underpins the occurrence of theatre and literature that engages closely with the colonial canon. The connections between Deleuze and contemporary postcolonial literature inevitably calls upon one of the most significant, however perhaps least understood studies of postcolonial literature, Peter Hallward’s *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific*.⁶ This study argues that the postcolonial literature is best understood as an ultimately singular category: non-relational and specific. However, this dissertation predominantly calls upon the first wave of postcolonial studies, with the work of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Frantz Fanon, and the major approach to postcolonial literature that is derived from their works, which locates its primary characteristics in the concept of an “imperial- colonial dialectic” itself. In this model, any writing within the postcolonial area is subject to the political and social control that is involved in the relationship between coloniser and colonised. This dissertation is concerned with the ways in which the author’s or playwright’s perception of the social, political and cultural state of the Caribbean, and the wider and personal relationship with the Empire is reflected in their work. Within this dissertation, it is not inferred that each figure occupies the role of *colonised* or *coloniser*, but instead interrogates this apparent dichotomy and to approach the terms as opposite ends of a spectrum that provide opportunity for, and threat of mobility. I have defined these terminologies used within this dissertation as follows: the term *Coloniser* is used in this dissertation to widely encompass the colonising European societies (France, Britain, Spain, Netherlands etc.). This research breaks this wide category into specific definitions to analyse the interaction between colonising society and the postcolonial text, to explore how the author has engaged with the ‘shared consciousness’ of their ‘nation’ through

⁵ Lorna Burns, *Contemporary Caribbean Writing and Deleuze: Literature Between the Postcolonialism and Post-Continental Philosophy*, (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2012): 2.

⁶ Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and Specific*, (Manchester: University of Manchester Press 2001)

a subconscious awareness, or whether their work is intentionally politically engaged. Conversely, *Colonised*, is used to widely encompass the Caribbean and its inhabitants, to whom the effects of colonisation have impacted their national and personal identity. This research explores how Caribbean texts have interacted with the postcolonial experience, and its impact on the individual history of colonialization, emancipation and independence, and how this is reflected in the art produced. The relationship between coloniser and colonised proposes the important question of the possibility of ‘de-colonising’ the culture, which has been at the centre of dynamic postcolonial debate, focusing on what ‘de-colonisation’ is, what it implies, and how it would be achieved. Some critics have stressed the need to recuperate pre-colonial language and culture, which can be achieved if colonisation is in fact, only a “passing historical feature”⁷ that will be left behind once full independence is reached. This dissertation postulates that de-colonisation as a return to pre-colonised society, is impossible, and that hybridity and syncretism is unescapable and a valuable feature of postcolonial society, and it is this hybridity that is symptomatic of postcolonial rewrites and responses. This dissertation adopts this dichotomous approach, in order to further the relationship between coloniser and colonised as reflected in the postcolonial literature and its relation to the larger issues of postcolonial culture.

The experience of colonisation across the Caribbean region, and the subsequent struggles within a postcolonial world has created the conditions for an explosion of diverse and powerful body of theatre and literature in English to occur. This dissertation explores a range of Anglophone Caribbean texts that are rewritings of, responses to, and adaptations of European, British and Irish canonical texts, interrogating the overarching question of how literature, both European and Caribbean, has responded to significant events through history, and what part it has played in contributing to reconciliation, revolution and defining independent national identity, inclusive of the unique cultural and regional identity that is prevalent in the Caribbean.

⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge 1989): 32.

To investigate this question, this dissertation is divided into three chapters that explore Caribbean texts alongside their colonial counterpart. The chapters have been organised through geographic lines, Chapter One, *Re: Framing Europe*, explores the ways in which Caribbean texts write back to the colonising force of Europe, in the rewriting and responses to privileged texts from England, Norway and Russia. The chapter investigates the Caribbean as a location for canonical texts to be revised, engaging in a dialogue with the master narratives that are transported across the Atlantic. Bhabha's concept of mimicry enlightened this aspect of the discourse, in which the canonical texts are transformed in order to uncover and expose the issues that face the postcolonial world.

Chapter Two, *Ireland and The Caribbean* engages with the growing body of research surrounding the literary and cultural connections between Ireland and the Caribbean, investigating this relationship and the literature that reflects a complex kinship of spirits between the transatlantic regions. Maria McGarrity's 2008 study *Washed by the Gulf Stream*⁸ is of particular significance to this chapter, and explores the social, cultural and historical connections, that are investigated in this chapter, through a detailed analysis of language, structure and history.

The final chapter, *Approaches to the Canon*, interrogates the authority of the Western canon and the ways in which postcolonial Caribbean writing works to destabilise and dislodge the power it holds. This chapter adopts a Hegelian line of thought in order to explore the implications of the relationships in Homer's *Odyssey* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and their Caribbean revisions by Derek Walcott and Aimé Césaire respectively.

⁸ Maria McGarrity, *Washed By the Gulf Stream*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008).

Chapter One

Re: Framing Europe: Subtext, Admiration, Mimicry

Re: Framing Europe: Subtext, Admiration, Mimicry

This chapter intends to explore the ways in which the Caribbean writes back to the colonising force of Europe. The chosen texts from England, Russia and Norway allow exploration into how each nation is perceived by the Caribbean artists in question. This chapter aims to cover the ways in which Caribbean authors write back to their colonial pasts and how the Caribbean can be the setting for European works to be revised; to investigate the comparative contexts between the European texts and their Caribbean counterparts, and to provide an analysis focusing on the use of subtext and the issue of mimicry.

Context

The context that surround the pairings of texts is complex. This section will consider the multiplicity of the social, political and economic contexts that surround each text and the corresponding re-inscription. Britain's involvement with the Caribbean has spanned centuries, and the turbulent relationship has shaped the nations of the Empire and its inhabitants. Britain made colonising attempts of the Caribbean throughout the seventeenth century, and gained further nations over the next three-hundred years, including Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. Colonial rule profited from the wealth gained through the exploited labour of enslaved Africans which contributed to the triangular trade that saw the passage of slaves, sugar and rum transported between Africa, America and Britain. British colonial rule thus contributed to the identity of the British West Indies, combining with elements of former colonising periods ruled by the Dutch, Spanish and French culture that had been established. Britain came to influence the systems of education, law and politics that is still practiced in commonwealth countries. The Caribbean colonies continued to be a source of wealth and support during the

twentieth century. The post-war period saw waves of migration from the Caribbean to England, with West Indians seeking work and economic prosperity. Albeit welcomed with institutionalised racism, the influx of colonial citizens settled in the United Kingdom throughout the 1950s, which in turn produced a literary ‘boom’ with writers such as Naipaul, Selvon and Lamming publishing works⁹. This period of change also created the conditions for many colonies in the British West Indies to gain independence from British rule, and begin new chapters of self-governance. It is this tumultuous relationship between the British Empire and the Caribbean that is the common factor that unites the texts that will be explored in this chapter.

The postcolonial Caribbean texts under analysis in this chapter owe their existence to earlier texts, which will be referred to in this study as the prior text. Jean Rhys’s (1890 – 1979) seminal post-colonial novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*¹⁰ could not be realised without *Jane Eyre*¹¹, and thus owes its existence to the Victorian classic by Charlotte Brontë. The narrative of *Jane Eyre* takes the reader through the eponymous character’s cruelty-stricken childhood as an orphan, and her resistant strength that sees her struggle towards equality and freedom. The two novels share narrative elements, characters and to an extent thematic similarities which intrinsically bond the prior text to Rhys’s novel. *Wide Sargasso Sea* responds to the crazed Creole character of Bertha, named Antoinette in this so-called prequel; Rhys expounds this character and gives a voice and history to Brontë’s mad woman in the attic. Charlotte Brontë wrote *Jane Eyre* during a period of prosperity achieved through the exploits of colonialism, and the success of the Empire. The depiction of Victorian life that is conveyed in Brontë’s novel exposes the impact of the colonial conquest within plot and subtext. Some examples include the Master of Thornfield, Rochester, and his travels to the colonies; his concealed marriage to the creole woman from Jamaica; the reader also learns of St. John Rivers aspirations to set up a missionary in India with Jane accompanying him as his wife. *Jane Eyre*, perhaps most significantly,

⁹ Alison Donnell., *Twentieth- Century Caribbean Literature*, (Oxon: Routledge 2006): 11.

¹⁰ Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, (London: Penguin Publishing LTD 1997).

¹¹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, (London: Random House Publishing, 2000).

receives a welcomed inheritance from her Uncle, a merchant in Madeira, a Spanish colony at that time, the sizable inheritance awarding the titular character her financial freedom. Wolfgang G. Müller discusses this: “the colonial context is thus to a higher extent present in Brontë’s novel than one might expect in this tale of female self-realisation. But what is curious is that the protagonist... never applies her critical intelligence and moral consciousness to a wider context”¹². The decades that followed in the intervening years between the prior text, *Jane Eyre*, and the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966 saw great progress, the Caribbean widely gained independence from the British Empire, black rights were fought for in the United Kingdom and the United States of America challenged segregation laws. Jean Rhys’s novel therefore must be observed against these social and political upheavals, and can be seen to take its origins as a critical response to Brontë’s account of Rochester’s first marriage in Jamaica, and has come to be known as an “exemplary attack on a master narrative”¹³. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a paradoxical mix of its dependence on the prior text and an independent, original, modernist post-colonial text¹⁴. This response, rather than a rewriting examined in the following discussion, draws upon locations, characters and events of Brontë’s novel, these elements converge as the two novels interact and provide alternative perspectives. Although Rhys creates a direct dialogue with Brontë’s text, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not “simply ‘writing back’ to an English canonical text, but to the whole of the discursive field within which such a text operates and continues to operate in post-colonial worlds”¹⁵.

¹² Margaret Rubik ed., *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi):63.

¹³ Margaret Rubik ed., *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi): 63.

¹⁴ Margaret Rubik ed., *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi):64.

¹⁵ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (Oxon: Routledge 1995): 89.

Mustapha Matura and Elinor Cook have staged versions of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*¹⁶ and Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*¹⁷ respectively; the play's authors write back to the discursive field of colonial literature, rather than to the authors of their prior texts. Both 'new' versions relocate the setting, time and social stratum of the plays to draw out and apply a postcolonial lens to the prior text. Trinidadian playwright, Mustapha Matura, has been a leading figure in West Indian and Black theatre for five decades. Born in Trinidad, Matura moved to London in 1961, and his career has seen him collect prestigious awards and recognition for his representation of the Trinidadian experience. His version of *Three Sisters*, *After Chekhov*, debuted in 1988 at the Tricycle Theatre titled *Trinidad Sisters*, but reverted to the original name in a reworked and revived version of the play in 2006 at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. For the purpose of clarity, Matura's version will be referred to as *Trinidad Sisters*, in this chapter. Matura's version is based on Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* written in 1900 and premiered a year later at Moscow Art Theatre, with the action of the play taking place a decade previous. Chekhov wrote of and during a period of transition between the old and new ways, from land-owning nobility to the increase of industrialisation that saw social and economic change. *Three Sisters* explores the somewhat static lives of the Prozorov family after the death of their father. Tobias Döring discusses the anxiety experienced by the characters in Chekhov's play: "The sisters' restlessness and disorientation is dramatically presented in the metaphor of their physical separation from the capital Moscow, to which they constantly plan, but invariably fail, to return. But the sense of their futile longing and stagnation calls for some vision of future progress and movement."¹⁸

¹⁶ Anton Chekhov, *Three Sisters*, trans. Julius West. (London: Sovereign Classics, 2012).

¹⁷ Elinor Cook, *The Lady from The Sea*, (London: Nick Herne Books 2017).

¹⁸ Tobias Döring, "Dislocating Stages: Mustapha Matura's Caribbean rewriting of Synge and Chekhov", *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 2 no. 1 (June 2008): 80.

Elinor Cook's version of Ibsen's 1888 play *The Lady from The Sea*¹⁹, was commissioned by the Donmar Warehouse for the Autumn Season 2017, and directed by Kwame Kwei-Armah. Ibsen's play of self-determination and duty examines notions of freedom and responsibility against the backdrop of Norway's icy fjords. The play is a haunting tale of bourgeois realism, interrogating the motives for marriage, combined with a highly symbolic folk tale about a stranded mermaid, with the narrative following Ellida's choice to remain in a safe marriage or pursue a dangerous future with a murderous man from her past. Cook's version thaws the icy associations and transports the play to the Post-War Tropics.

Cook and Matura both rewrite and relocate the original plays in a Caribbean island setting; these transportations are complex but well-pitched, and work to make a statement about the institution of colonialism with texts that have the ability to critique the institution of colonialism, if put within the right spaces. The domestic issues of the prior texts, when placed in a Caribbean setting, permit the domestic themes to become an overt allegory for the fight for independence and national identity. Cook and Matura do more than adapt the plays in a Caribbean setting, but manipulate character, time and space: taking the familiar narrative and making it foreign. Both playwrights, and perhaps to a lesser extent, Rhys, translate not only the narrative but the cultures, which is a "venture fraught with difficulties. Translation moves across the boundaries of semantic systems, mediates between the different codes and searches for correspondences"²⁰, in order to place their versions firmly within a Caribbean aesthetic.

Rhys, Matura and Cook all set the narratives in Caribbean spaces, be it real or imagined. Rhys borrows the characters from Brontë, and expands the illusions to the past on the colonised island of Jamaica, imagining the childhood and past of young Bertha/ Antoinette, which may have

¹⁹ Henrik Ibsen, *The Lady from the Sea* in *Plays: Three*, trans. Michael Meyer, (London: Methuen Drama 1988)

²⁰ Tobias Döring, "Dislocating Stages: Mustapha Matura's Caribbean rewriting of Synge and Chekhov", *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 2 no. 1 (June 2008): 83.

been influenced by her own experience of childhood, as a Creole child in Dominica. Matura and Cook similarly relocate the action of *Three Sisters*, and *The Lady from the Sea* to new spaces. The postcolonial writers explore the common colonial/ postcolonial theme of dislocation and displacement in their texts, although the texts do not directly interact with issues of forced movement, the notion of belonging is crucial to all the texts under investigation in this chapter. The characters similarly experience an uprooting from locations that the characters regard as home, be it a locality or a country. Matura places the narrative in the capital city of Trinidad, Port of Spain, with the restlessness felt by the sisters reflected in their longing for their time in England. As previously mentioned, Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, takes place in a Russian provincial town on the periphery of the cultural hub of Moscow. In Matura's version of *Three Sisters*, Trinidad's capital city takes the place of the provincial town. Colonial and postcolonial discourse often calls upon the proposed binary of the 'centre' and 'margin', or 'metropolis and 'periphery', to interrogate the notion that some forms of experience are peripheral. The terms also carry a geographic and geometric implication which may be misleading – marginalised or marginal groups may not endorse the notion of a colonial centre, which may not have a fixed location apart from the margins (as is relevant to the relationship between Ireland and England). The metropolis refers to a colonial 'centre' of culture, power and order, it also symbolises the origins of the enforced colonial language, English, (as investigated further in this chapter) and education. Applying this notion to the texts under analysis Rhys, Matura and Cook all attempt to disrupt this binary by exposing it within the narrative. Matura's *Three Sisters*, named Alma, Helen and Audrey in his updated version, long for England, and perceive Trinidad as the periphery, experiencing the 'edges', to borrow the term from *The Empire Writes Back*²¹, of the culture, power and language. The sisters, although living a privileged life, dream of returning to England where they spent some of their youth.

²¹Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge 1989): 76.

Matura's play asserts the perception that his characters are experiencing a marginal or marginalised existence in the Caribbean, separate and secondary from the 'Mother country':

Alma. ... I suppose we could do something different, but what? Do other people's accounts privately? Go away? And do what? Where? The war...

Audrey. Cambridge, that's it, we could go back to Cambridge, and live there. We could sell, or rent the house, then we can do what we like. Read, take leisurely walks, discuss current topics, meet interesting people, stay up all night drinking coffee, and have wonderful experiences.

Alma. Yes, that would be nice. But I was...

Audrey. We could be frivolous when we want to or serious when the mood takes us, without narrow minded neighbours disapproving.

The language in this extract reveals the attitudes held toward Trinidad and England; the sisters aspire to return to the happier days of their childhood, and it is implicit within their dialogue that the sisters perceive Cambridge as a site of superior intellect, culture and open-mindedness. Trinidad, however, occupies the opposite end of the proposed binary, interacting vicariously with the 'centre' of intellect from the 'marginal' standpoint of Port of Spain. Tobias Döring comments upon Matura's choice to set this play in a peripheral space: "[*Three Sisters* is] set in peripheral places which are seen, alternatively, as sites of authenticity or of deprivation, and both examine the relation of these places to some absent central authority: ... Moscow and its social life, towards which Chekhov's protagonists direct all their hopes and yearnings."²² The Prozorov family experience displacement and relocation in Chekhov's original, and Matura maintains this within his version. His characters are subject to the same displacement and relocation as the narrative. Matura weaves in these attitudes towards the metropolis throughout the play, and the relationship between the two locations is further complicated by the outbreak of the Second World War as the action progresses.

²² Tobias Döring, "Dislocating Stages: Mustapha Matura's Caribbean rewriting of Synge and Chekhov", *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 2 no. 1 (June 2008): 82.

Similarly, Elinor Cook also relocates a new version of *The Lady from the Sea* to a subtropical Caribbean island of her own creation, substituting the mountains and fjords for the rainforests and oceans surrounding her imagined island nation. The character of Ellida in Ibsen's play experiences a similar longing from a location that she has been displaced from, for Ellida, her childhood spent in close proximity to the open water of the Fjords is disrupted when she marries Dr. Wangel. Cook maintains Ellida's sense of longing within her revised Caribbean version, exchanging the icy fjords for the warmth of the Caribbean Sea. The English family she marries into live within the hills, with their view of the sea obscured by the dense flora. Like Rhys and Matura, Cook, places her island on the periphery of the 'centre' of England, as a point of reference for the play to ensue. Ellida, in Cook's version, is a native woman, dealing with the struggle, or lack thereof, of integrating into a white, middle-class English family. Although race does not seem to be an overt issue in the play, the concept that the island is marginal to England's dominant power is clear. Characters introduced from England hold control within the scenes and dialogue such as the introduction of Arnholm, a teacher. His presence in the play is the catalyst for change, he pursues Hilde and is a source of confusion and comfort for Dr. Wangel and Ellida. The notion that the characters are delivered to the island serves as a symbol of the colonial intrusion, and as an indication of England as the metropolis and exporter of dominant figures, power and control. The decision to relocate the plays, and for Cook to realign Ellida as a native of the island, with the other prominent characters as English, works to isolate the character of Ellida and thus she occupies another binary as the non-dominant figure: the other. Ashcroft et al. comment on this: "in writing out of the condition of 'Otherness' postcolonial texts assert the complex of intersecting 'peripheries' as the actual substance of experience. But the struggle which this assertion entails – the 're-placement' of the post-colonial text – is focused in their attempt to control the processes of writing."²³

²³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge 1989): 77.

A commonality between Cook and Matura's rewritings is the re/positioning of the perceived metropolis and the margins: Chekhov perceived that the provincial town dreamt of Moscow, this for Matura is transposed to England and Trinidad, and specifically Cambridge and Port of Spain. Cook also depicts the imagined Caribbean island as being a nation on Britain's periphery, with an Oxford education being the height of Bolette's aspirations. Instead of the vague dreams of flight depicted by Ibsen, Cook presents the desire for education in her Caribbean version:

Arnholm. Wouldn't you like to go to oxford? Take a punt along the river?
In a jaunty boater?

Bolette. They don't do that really, do they?

Arnholm. Oh, they do. All the time. It's quite insufferable... Would you like me to speak to some people. See what I can do? You could be there for the start of the new term.²⁴

It appears all roads lead back to Oxbridge, symbolising the epitome and epicentre of British colonial rule, an ideal inherited from Britain's civilising mission. Matura opens *Trinidad Sisters* with the sisters exchanging their fond memories of their short time in Cambridge: "I had a dream last night, we were back in Cambridge, playing hopscotch, and skipping through the park, we were so happy there, don't you remember Alma?"²⁵. The sisters idealise Cambridge as the pinnacle of English civil education, with more than mere nostalgia for a content childhood. Their tendency to romanticise England underpins the impact of colonial rule: the systematic denial of the colonised people and the indigenous learning structures, but instead prioritises the colonial systems of education as higher and prestigious. This reflects Matura's own notions of England, and the English people, that he acquired in his youth in Trinidad, revealed in an interview with Michael McMillan: "We grew up in the Caribbean thinking of England as civilised, whatever that means. To us, it meant good manners... a sense of the arts,

²⁴ Elinor Cook, *The Lady from The Sea*, (London: Nick Herne Books 2017): 119.

²⁵ Mustapha Matura, *Trinidad Sisters/Three Sisters After Chekhov*, (London: Oberon Classics 2006).18.

an ambition and aspiration for learning – enlightenment, evolving and bettering oneself as a human being. That is what we perceived England to be.”²⁶ Colonial education represents the key to social, political and economic upward mobility, within particular class and racial groupings.

In addition to the change of geographical location, the three responses also significantly manipulate time which further revise the narrative. These time shifts introduced by the adaptations, sees both plays set around the Second World War. *Three Sisters* is set forty years prior to Matura’s rewriting, with the action unfolding between 1939 and 1944, in the period of the Second World, a time that saw vast changes for both Europe and the Caribbean. Amid the destruction of Europe, the colonial attitudes and structures represented in the play were gradually but unmistakably changing, with Trinidad experiencing the impact of war from afar. The Caribbean, and Trinidad particularly experienced a change in attitude throughout the war, with the perceived binary between centre and periphery beginning to dissolve; this is partly due to military interaction from the United States of America which impacted the strength of the singular British rule. This disillusion of the metropolis is reflected in the attitudes portrayed in the play, “For West Indian writing in particular, the war years and the years preceding them have been termed ‘watershed’ for the awakening of counter-colonial consciousness”²⁷. During the thirties and forties, the Trinidadian intellectual formation called the Beacon group, prefigured much of the subsequent flourishing of West Indian literature. The Beacon group were an association of intellectuals dedicated to the “quest for West Indian identity”, through the promotion of research surrounding Asian and African cultures as a key influence upon Trinidadian society and inter-island communication, they transgressed the “boundaries established by colonial discourse”²⁸. This group placed themselves in the political arena and

²⁶ Kwei Owusu ed. *Black British Culture and Society: A text reader*, (London: Routledge 2000).

²⁷ Tobias Döring, “Dislocating Stages: Mustapha Matura’s Caribbean rewriting of Synge and Chekhov”, *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 2 no. 1 (June 2008): 84.

²⁸ Tobias Döring, “Dislocating Stages: Mustapha Matura’s Caribbean rewriting of Synge and Chekhov”, *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 2 no. 1 (June 2008): 84.

each individually worked towards abrogating the political and psychological dependence on Britain and European standards. Matura's decision to set his play against the backdrop of the war, and this transitional intellectual period, arguably has the additional effect of allowing the play to have allegorical qualities, offering a postcolonial view of the colonial Capital. Elinor Cook also repositions *The Lady from the Sea* in the mid 1950s; this period historically nurtured the desire for an independent Caribbean and that built upon British colonial values. The time shift provides an explanation for the sunken military ship carrying the Stranger, but also reframes Ibsen's narrative of marital equality and female freedom to be observed and re-evaluated against the advancing society that followed the Second World War, and further calls into focus the issues of gender equality in a postcolonial landscape. At surface level, this revision of the setting delivers an appealing aesthetic, however, Cook's relocation of time and space also works to preserve the transitional zeitgeist of the *fin-de-siècle*, as captured in Ibsen's original, with the post-war period offering great change and uncertainty, and a time in which the colonial status quo was called into question. The wartime and post-war contexts inject the rewritings with another dimension to be considered, as the fallout from the war serves as a turning point for many of the former colonised countries to seek independence from Britain.

Matura and Cook transport their characters and narratives more than once. Elinor Cook firstly relocates the action to Britain; prior to the action within the play Doctor Wangel and his family have connections with England, and are colonial figures who appear to be stationed on the fictional island, thus relocating the characters once more and stripping the characters, and the play, of its Norwegian connection. Most notably, Cook's version of Ibsen's play manipulates the race of characters, which overlays a colonial issue which is simply not present in Ibsen's original text. The characters of Ellida, the Stranger and Ballestrad were reworked to be black or native peoples, thus colonial subjects. This maintained the sense that Ellida is arguably perceived and presented as the 'other' but the divide is now along race lines as well as class lines. The concept of the 'other' in this study is based upon the theory of Edward Said, as

asserted in *Orientalism*²⁹: the concept of the ‘other’ functions within a binary with the West, with the West representing a European strong, masculine power in contrast to the non-European, feminised, weak East. It is perhaps important to note that the concept of the ‘other’ in this study refers only to the mode of discourse and a construct that is present within global relations, and not relating to the authors. Thus, Ellida is a symbolic ‘other’, and so divided through difference from the white characters in the play. Kwei-Armah directed the Donmar production, and aligned the casting with these changes to location. However, the addition of this colour-sensitive casting also throws in the question of colonial race relations and the apparent issue, or lack of issue surrounding intermarriage. The characters were consequently divided into what could be interpreted as ‘native’ and ‘colonial’, which in turn creates the issue of belonging and ownership that was raised in the version, adding another dimension to Ibsen’s original without extensive change to the script. It can be suggested that this division of ‘native’ and ‘colonial’ extends to include the location and themes present in the play. Belonging on or to the island is an interesting diversion from Ibsen, exploring the colonial issue of ‘ownership’, and inversely the notion of belonging to the island. It could be argued that Ellida’s internal struggle to decide between the land and the sea, and between her old love and her husband also were metonymic for her own colonial relationship with her homeland, interrogating a sense of being simultaneously belonging to the land, but being bound by marriage to the force that owns the land. Thus, the play explores the issue of finding an independent identity within this complex colonial construct. Kwei-Armah remarked that he intended Ellida’s personal struggle to represent the island’s struggle to regain national identity in the wake of independence, which was sensitively and carefully portrayed. Certainly, there are discrepancies in the history of this imagined island than that of the actual Caribbean nations in terms of historical race relations, however the play is evidently catering for a British theatre-going audience, with the focus on maintaining and reinventing Ibsen’s themes rather than remaining faithful to Caribbean colonial history. Matura also takes a similar approach, reworking the characters and their histories to

²⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, (London: Penguin 2016)

remove the connection to Chekhov's Russian suburbia. *Trinidad Sisters* and *The Lady from the Sea* are skilfully transposed through and between time and space by Matura and Cook, as if moving music scores between keys, to important destinations that are relatable to British audiences. Jean Rhys writes against the grain of *Jane Eyre* and her novel is the model for counter discourse, whereas Cook and Matura write back to the Empire using Chekhov and Ibsen as their tools.

Mimicry

This section will interrogate and explore the complexities of mimicry in postcolonial literature that is focused around the Caribbean. Cultural theorist Homi K. Bhabha discusses his concept of mimicry in his essay *Of Mimicry and Men*. This concept will underpin the further exploration into the chosen texts. The theory of mimicry is apparent in different forms of the three pairs of texts, some more overt than others, but each text is inextricable from its counterpart and is related through mimicry and imitation of its prior text. Bhabha states that "Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognisable 'other', as a subject of difference that is *almost the same, but not quite*, which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence... Mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference."³⁰ Mimicry is an increasingly interesting term in postcolonial theory, it has come to describe the ambivalent relationship between colonised and coloniser – that is to mean the mixed feelings held between and towards each party, within a postcolonial landscape. Colonial discourse encourages the colonised subjects to 'mimic' the coloniser, through the adoption of their cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values. However, the reproduction of these effects is never straightforward or accurate, rather the result is a "blurred copy" of the coloniser, which has

³⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge 1994): 86.

been generally received as a threatening and subversive act, which Bhabha refers to as “slippage”. Although mimicry has arguably often been the overt goal of imperial policy, Lord Macaulay’s 1835 *Minute to Parliament*³¹ serves as an interesting example of the ways in which policy has encouraged and advocated the reproduction of English art and education in India (this model of colonial education can be evidenced across the Empire and the Caribbean). Macaulay, however, made an explicit derision of native education, and specified that an English education should be imparted to the “millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals, and in intellect”.³² This statement suggests that the mimicked English education received was to be hybridised and therefore ambivalent. Homi K. Bhabha has crucially used the term ‘mimicry’ in his view of ambivalence of colonial discourse, stating that the phenomenon of mimicry is inherently related to a negative form of mockery, and will always appear to be a type of parody of whatever, or whomever, is being mimicked. Bhabha asserts that the colonisers desire was to improve the colonial subjects, to project an image of himself, but to also maintain a clear sense of difference. Theoretically stating that the ‘other’ becomes almost the same as the coloniser, but does not achieve complete hegemonic or cultural assimilation. It is the difference that gives power not only to the coloniser, but also is the difference that becomes a subversive tool of the colonised. Mimicry locates the fractures in the dominance of colonial discourse, and presents the uncertainty in its control of the colonised subjects. This theory is pertinent when applied to the literature that owes its origins to colonial or European prior texts, as not only is there evidence of the concept within the plots, dialogue and language but the practice of ‘writing back’ “marginalises the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it imitable”³³.

³¹ Elmer H. Cutts, “The Background of Macaulay’s Minute” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 58 no. 4 (July 1953): 824.

³² Elmer H. Cutts, “The Background of Macaulay’s Minute” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 58 no. 4 (July 1953): 824.

³³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge 1994): 88.

Returning to the notion of “slippage” and “ambivalence” provides lucrative scope in this study; the space between the familiar and the strange is common within all texts under investigation and it is that space that creates a sense of *déjà vu*. *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *The Lady from the Sea* and *Trinidad Sisters* all gain their aesthetic originality through difference, but their dependence on the prior text arguably creates a form of textual mimicry. Cook and Matura do not aim to mimic the authors, as discussed previously, but it is possible to trace the instances of mimicry that the characters’ display. The plays simulate the conditions of the island nations under colonial rule, and perform an examination of the cultural mimicry that Bhabha describes. *Trinidad Sisters* investigates the concept of hybridised colonial education, to be “*almost white, but not quite*”, the colonial subject becomes a recognisable version of the ‘other’:

Helen. Jean, excuse me, the outside fork is the fish fork, and the napkin goes on your lap, not...

Jean. What? (Rises.) Oh, I’m so sorry, I didn’t... excuse me.³⁴

The upper-class emphasis on manners and debatably British etiquette causes the divide between the black elite society and aspirational Jean, belonging to a lower class. This strikes the audience as discordant, as the colonial desire is sustained through three sisters upholding the British values to the detriment of their fellow colonial subjects. Matura depicts the complexity of belonging to, or perceived belonging to opposing societies, wearing a mask of whiteness, as conceptualised by Frantz Fanon as discussed in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*³⁵ which states that “for the black man there is only one destiny. And its white.”³⁶ The characters in this version of *Three Sisters* become “reformed” and “recognisable”³⁷ colonial subjects, but will continue to be the ‘other’ to the coloniser despite their efforts to prove their “equal value of their intellect”³⁸. Arguably the sisters’ reproduction of the European manners, tastes, and intellect

³⁴ Mustapha Matura, *Trinidad Sisters/ Three Sisters After Chekhov*, (London: Oberon Classics 2006): 35.

³⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, (London: Paladin 1970).

³⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, (London: Paladin 1970): 9.

³⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge 1994): 86.

³⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, (London: Paladin 1970): 9.

could be interpreted as a subconscious subversive act to threaten the authority of colonial institution. However, the sisters' decision to uphold the British standards appears to be a manifestation of their desire to attain the perhaps unattainable destiny of 'whiteness'.

Wide Sargasso Sea departs furthest from the prior text in comparison to the other texts in this chapter, however Rhys's response writes into her novel the complexity of Bhabha's concept. The slippage that occurs between the imposed colonial language of English is reproduced and hybridised which results in the Creole patois that is evidenced in the speech of the characters within the novel, and it is representative of the critical tone of the dialogue created between the prior text and Rhys' novel, indicating the flawed nature of colonial mimicry. The linguistic hybridisation of Creole, as employed by the character of Christophine, Antoinette's 'surrogate' mother, commands a combination of French and English as well as Jamaican patois. Christophine was gifted as a wedding present from the old Mr. Cosway to Annette, and as such is a commodified woman, despite this she displays a fierceness and independence from her white oppressors. Christophine significantly opens the novel, and remains an omnipresent figure throughout the narrative, linked intimately with nature, magic and obeah. Her speech is recollected by Antoinette in Part One of the novel: "She had a quiet laugh (when she did laugh), and though she could speak good English if she wanted to, and French too as well as patois, she took care to talk as they talked"³⁹. Christophine has good command of many languages, yet uses her speech in an attempt to assimilate with the Jamaican woman. Mimicking linguistic habits affords her a certain respect within the Cosway household, but does not result in her integration into the female social groups in Jamaica, thus, the mimic can never fully escape from their position of the 'other'. The mimicry is further "emblematised"⁴⁰ in the novel by the insecure identity of the parrot. The parrot, an imitator by nature, only speaks a French Creole: "he didn't talk very well, he could say *Qui est la? Qui est la?* and answer himself *Che Coco*,

³⁹ Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, (London: Penguin Publishing LTD 1997): 7.

⁴⁰ Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, (London: Penguin Publishing LTD 1997): xix.

Che Coco.”⁴¹ His incessant questioning, translated to *who is there?* which could represent the paranoia, persecution and insecurity felt by Antoinette and her family. Furthermore, the repetition of his name affirms his identity, repeating it like an incantation that serves as futile protection. The speech aligns with that of Christophine, and come to represents the defiant, mocking resistance to become Anglicized, however this attempt does not protect him from Mr. Mason’s unexplained and impulsive act of clipping the bird’s wings. This act exhibits his need to control, indicating the domineering attitude of the colonial white English male, which ultimately prevents his escape from the fatal fire at Coulibri.

The concept of mimicry within postcolonial writing, and through the portrayal of the colonial subject replicating colonial standards produces the potential of destabilising of colonial power and discourse, and engages with the significant political and cultural uncertainty of imperial dominance, both before and after independence has been gained. “It is from this mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilising mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double, that my instances of colonial imitation come”.⁴²

Subtext

Bhabha’s theory invites further exploration of subtext, and how it has been transformed from prior text to reworking, response and adaptation and whether the subtext works to dislodge the colonial canon. Bhabha theorised: “The visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction. It is a form of colonial discourse that is uttered *inter dicta*: a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which is though known must be kept concealed; a discourse uttered between the lines and as such both against rules and within

⁴¹ Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, (London: Penguin Publishing LTD 1997): 22.

⁴² Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge 1994): 86.

them.”⁴³ This section will investigate this crossroads, and the space that resides between the lines. The literature that is writing back to the Empire functions on the axis between what is known and unknown to the reader, and as this chapter has established, diverge from their prior texts. The subtext can be analysed in three different ways: subtext as influence; subtext that is inferred or projected; and the subtext that is conveyed through symbolism.

Wide Sargasso Sea is the metaphorical phoenix that rises from the ashes of the flames caused by Bertha in *Jane Eyre*. Jean Rhys is driven by a desire to pull apart the violence and torture of Rochester’s treatment of his first wife, the wild mad creole figure of Jamaican-born Bertha Mason⁴⁴. Rhys goes further than giving the voiceless a voice and gives the ‘mad Creole’ a story, an explanation to her actions, but also places responsibility on Rochester and the colonial systems that oppressed Antoinette as a child, giving her conflicted sense of belonging, in a perpetual state of being caught between lands and societies. Antoinette and her mother faced rejection from both colonial England and the emancipated slaves of Jamaica, being targeted by violence and racism from both sides. In Antoinette’s youth, her relationships with the native children were tainted by their knowledge of their position in the community:

She hear we poor like beggar. We ate salt fish – no money for real fish.
That old house so leaky, you run with calabash to catch water when it rain.
Plenty of white people in Jamaica. Real white people, they got gold
money... old money white people nothing but white nigger now, and black
nigger better than white nigger. (10)

This description of Antoinette’s childhood echoes that of Jean Rhys’s own upbringing in Dominica, and her struggle to integrate into life in England, as well as her position as a white colonial figure in Dominica. The novel negotiates the complexities of the colonial situation in Jamaica, with Antoinette occupying the paradoxical role of the “white nigger” (10). Rhys’s depiction of the young Antoinette expands upon and works to explain the gruesome portrayal

⁴³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge 1994): 89.

⁴⁴ Margaret Rubik ed., *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi): 64.

of the first Mrs. Rochester of Brontë's novel, and perhaps sought to criticise the "deep-seated prejudices towards the West Indies"⁴⁵.

What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and had a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.⁴⁶

Jean Rhys took Brontë's account of her untamed character, plagued by madness and caged like an animal, and the sparse information about their marriage in "Spanish Town, Jamaica"⁴⁷ and created an explanation of how her condition came to be. Rhys allows the reader to "paradoxically witness the genesis of "Bertha Mason", the madwoman in *Jane Eyre*, as a result of the pressure and manipulation to which her husband subjects her in Rhys's novel. From this point of view Rhys seems to provide a (fictional) explanation for the madness which is attributed to Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's novel."⁴⁸ Rhys mimics the subtle corruption of Jane's name to "Janet" by Rochester, arguably an exercise of control over his fiancé, in *Jane Eyre* and transfers it to her own novel. Rhys masterly reveals the transformation of Antoinette's name to Bertha and thus intertwining the two narratives into a larger timeline. The novel is an expansion of the colonial subtext that underpins the prior text, Helen Tiffin references *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a familiar example of "colonial counter-discourse". Her definition follows: "a "post-colonial writer takes a character or characters, or the basic assumptions of the British canonical text, and unveils those assumptions, subverting the text for post-colonial purposes."⁴⁹

Jean Rhys responded to the colonial subtext and brought it to the forefront of her novel, however it is impossible to discern whether all the subtext was intended, or even present within

⁴⁵ Margaret Rubik ed., *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi): 64.

⁴⁶ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, (London: Random House Publishing, 2000): 338.

⁴⁷ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, (London: Random House Publishing, 2000): 335.

⁴⁸ Margaret Rubik ed., *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi): 71.

⁴⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (Oxon: Routledge 1995): 97.

Brontë's novel, *Jane Eyre*, or whether Rhys inferred her own experience of being a white Creole in Dominica into the narrative. As discussed by Müller: "It is a problem, however, whether the modern writer uncovers a subtext which is contained or hidden in the text of *Jane Eyre* or whether she reads or projects a subtext into the earlier text."⁵⁰ It is beyond the scope of this study to evidence and analyse each instance of uncovered subtext, references or allusions to *Jane Eyre* that feature in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. However, Rhys's response illuminates the colonial undertones of the prior text, which modern readings of *Jane Eyre* are impacted by the increased awareness of history, and thus post-colonial period that recognises the "ideology, principles, and practices of colonialism."⁵¹

Elinor Cook injects the colonial subtext into her version of *The Lady from the Sea*, through the reworking of location, characters, and the manipulation of time period. The transposition of the action from Norway to the Caribbean and the addition of colour conscious casting creates layers of subtext that are not as present in the original. The issue of ownership and free will, which are at the core of Ibsen's original are expanded and complicated by the overlaying of colonial themes. Both versions of the play undoubtedly still privilege the issues of female freedom and independence, however, Cook's version calls into question the contemporary branches of feminism, which build upon the prior text. The main narrative focuses on Ellida's complex sense of belonging, which culminate in her contrasting relationships with the Stranger and Dr. Wangel. Ellida must be given the freedom to decide whether to abandon her English husband for her mysterious murderous native sailor, in order to make the choice to stay and rebuild her marriage. In Cook's version, the native characters of Ellida and the Stranger share their fixation with the sea, representing the opportunity for escape and freedom. Thus, when the Stranger

⁵⁰ Margaret Rubik ed., *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi): 66.

⁵¹ Margaret Rubik ed., *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi): 68.

invites Ellida to escape with him to the sea, it is unnerving to witness an older white, bourgeois male prevent her from making her own choice.

Stranger. (To Ellida) You have to come of your own free will.
 Do you hear me?
 Or, if you choose to stay.
 That must be your choice too.
 Yours and no one else's.
 (The Stranger looks at Wangel)
 Tomorrow night.
 Wait for me here.
 Alone.
 ...
 Ellida. Did you hear what he said?
 My own free will.
 Wangel. He's dangerous.
 Surely you can see that?
 Ellida. Yes.
 Wangel. And you're afraid of him?
 Ellida. Yes.
 Wangel. Well then.
 It's decided.
 We'll go to the police.⁵²

However, issues of race do not play out as expected – especially given the time, place and colonial family – the dissonance created by the aesthetics of the casting create new subtext, and make Ellida metonymic of a Caribbean nation yearning for independence, on the cusp on self-governance. The subtext then plays out the story of a nation (Ellida) desiring independence but ruled by the colonial powers (Wangel) idealising the uncertain and perhaps dangerous dreams of revolution or coups (Stranger). The Stranger, although presented as a wild and violent character, interacts with Ellida in a temperate manner, and prioritises her equality and ability to master her own destiny. The Stranger could thus represent the fictional country pre-colonisation, but instead of lying dormant waiting to be released, his reputation is marred and destroyed, and as such it is not possible to return to him. Ellida must instead negotiate with her husband, the coloniser, to determine a new and revised status quo.

⁵² ⁵² Elinor Cook, *The Lady from The Sea*, (London: Nick Herne Books 2017).

Trinidad Sisters is similarly transposed to illuminate the colonial treatment life in the British West Indies. Mustapha Matura weaves symbolic images through his play. The sisters house, which they inherit from their late father, can be seen as a symbol for the British colonial institution, holding the values and rules of the Empire. The brother, Peter (who did not experience Cambridge in his youth), acquires the home, and takes over management of the house when he marries a Trinidadian girl, Jean, who is not as ‘civilised’ as the sisters. The colonial values appear to be disappearing and fading under the control of Peter and Jane, as we learn the staff have been dismissed and the finances are struggling. The infiltration of Jean, as a common Trinidadian figure seems to be the catalyst to the houses downfall. This image of the house symbolising the British governed nation falling into chaos when controlled by the Trinidadians makes a critical statement about the condition of Trinidad in post-independence, the era in which Matura was writing. Matura’s play echoes the sense of disappointment that followed the initial euphoria of independence settled, there is a notable body of critical literary study that explores this; including Caribbean studies scholar, Michael Niblett, and his chapter “*The Problem of Living every man for himself*”: *Problems in the Postindependence Body (Politic)*, included in the book *The Caribbean Novel since 1945: Cultural Practice, Form, and the Nation-State*.⁵³ The country united for independence but became divided when trying to re/discover their identity as Trinidadians, divided along race and class lines. The rediscovery of national identity is a complex and ongoing issue explored through subtext in the two plays.

Trinidad Sisters, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The Lady from the Sea* achieve a successful departure from their origins, creating dialogue with the prior text that provides a commentary on colonial exploits. Homi K. Bhabha’s theory of mimicry enlightens the cultural and literary implications of ‘writing back’ to the Empire, counter-discourse provides a significant insight into the debate surrounding the relationship between the Caribbean and Europe.

⁵³ Michael Niblett, *The Caribbean Novel since 1945: Cultural Practice, Form, and the Nation-State*, (University Press of Mississippi: Mississippi 2012).

Chapter Two

Ireland and The Caribbean: Shared History, Shared Words

Ireland and The Caribbean: Shared History, Shared Words

In recent years, there has been an emerging body of research that approaches Ireland and the Caribbean from a comparative perspective. These books and collections indicate scholars' increasing recognition of the relationship between Ireland and the Caribbean, and the social, historic and artistic connections shared between the transatlantic regions. This chapter proposes to investigate the shared relationship: exploring the historical connections between Ireland and the Caribbean; the use of 'alternative' English language; and investigate the structure of the plays and poems under analysis.

Shared History

The first section of this chapter touches upon the vast and complex histories of Ireland and the Caribbean regions. This section investigates where their histories intersect and what that reveals about the shared experience of the Irish and Caribbean peoples as it is reflected in the literature. It is beyond the scope of this study to perform a thorough investigation of Irish history, and Irish history within the Caribbean, but this section sets out to provide a background of the social, cultural and political landscape that the texts and their corresponding re-inscription should be observed against.

Ireland has often been excluded from postcolonial literary dialogue, due to the perceived rigidity of the ‘old’ definition⁵⁴ agreed upon by scholars contributing to postcolonial theory, eliminating Ireland because of the “largely white and westernised [population], Ireland historically was in the paradoxical position of being a colony *within* Europe.”⁵⁵ Thus, not belonging to Helen Tiffin’s definition of postcolonial as “writing and reading practices grounded in some form of colonial experience occurring outside Europe but as a consequence of European expansion into and exploitation of ‘the other’ worlds”⁵⁶. However, to only consider Irish authors and literary works within the body of Irish studies neglects the wider dialogue with postcolonial nations that share the experience of British occupation and influence on the national identity. Edward Said discusses the notion that all colonised nations are arguably related through their shared experience of colonisation and subjection to imperial treatment: “The geographical connections are closer between England and Ireland than that between England and India... But the imperial relationship is there in all cases. Irish people can never be English any more than Cambodians or Algerians can be French.”⁵⁷ Although Ireland’s position within postcolonial theory challenges the “old” definition, in more than only the geographic sense, it is also challenging in regard to the weight given to the prefix “post”. Ireland is unique in that the island has a divided connection to the colonising power, in which the colonial moment is simultaneously past and present, both independent (The Republic of Ireland) and under the governance of England (Northern Ireland). Caitríona Moloney and Helen Thompson suggested that “in order for Ireland to be considered part of the postcolonial paradigm, the paradigm itself must change. And conversely, Irish studies must do away with its isolationism...in order to see itself relationally with other cultures and nations”⁵⁸. This

⁵⁴ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (Oxon: Routledge 1995); The Empire Writes Back, (London: Routledge 1989).

⁵⁵ Pordzik, Ralph. “A Postcolonial View of Ireland and the Irish Conflict in Anglo-Irish Utopian Literature Since the Nineteenth Century.” *Irish Studies Review* 9.3 (2001): 332.

⁵⁶ Pedersen, Ellen-Marie., “Why Ireland Should be Categorized as Postcolonial”, *Star of the Sea: A Postmodern/ Postcolonial Voyage into the Irish Famine*. < <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/star-of-the-sea-a-postcolonialpostmodern-voyage-into-the-irish-famine/why-ireland?path=postcolonial-theory>>

⁵⁷ Said, Edward., *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Vintage 1994): 275.

⁵⁸ Moloney, Caitríona, and Helen Thompson. “Introduction: ‘Border Traffic.’”, *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies*, vol.7 no.1 (2000): 4.

chapter intends to include Ireland and the literature produced (and subsequently reproduced by Caribbean authors and playwrights) in the postcolonial dialogue in order to analyse the history and literature that form the identity that is symptomatic of a nation post-colonisation.

An interrogation of Irish history is vast, but it is important to note the stark similarities of colonial treatment within Ireland. The early colonising efforts are subject to debate, with some scholars dating the first colonising efforts to the Twelfth century. King Henry VIII declared himself King of Ireland in 1541 and the English rule of Ireland continued until the partition of the nation which led to the Southern part of the island gaining independence in 1922. Ireland's identity as a postcolonial nation is therefore a product of the combined British and Irish influence, (both Northern Ireland and The Republic of Ireland arguably had to revise their identity after the nation divided). Stephanie Bachorz discusses that Irish identity had not "merely been hibernating during the eight hundred years of British domination, ready to wake up on the day the last soldier will be withdrawn from their native soil"⁵⁹. The Irish were creating and developing their own identity whilst resisting the British influence, thus both societies contributed to the national identity, which in turn allowed the colonial power to shape it. This is a behaviour shared by many postcolonial and Caribbean nations that were required to allow the colonising power to influence their "sense of self". This shared behaviour and relationship with Britain may be a factor that has united Caribbean artists to the canonical Irish poets, playwrights and authors. Derek Walcott is reported to have seen the Caribbean and Irish as "analogous populations: both are diasporic peoples who share the historical experience of dislocation, rupture and colonization.... They [the Irish] were also colonials with the same kind of problems that existed in the Caribbean. They were the niggers of Britain."⁶⁰ It is this shared

⁵⁹ Bachorz, Stephanie. "Postcolonial Theory and Ireland: Revising Postcolonialism." *Critical Ireland: New Essays in Literature and Culture*. Ed. Alan A. Gillis, Aaron Kelly, and Edna Longley. (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001): 12.

⁶⁰ Donnell, Alison., Maria McGarrity and Evelyn O'Callaghan, *Caribbean Irish Connections: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2015): 4.

solidarity that will be under investigation in this chapter, to assess the dialogue created by the Irish texts and their Caribbean rewritings.

Nini Rogers postulates that the Irish have had a presence in the Caribbean since the seventeenth century, with their presence changing dramatically throughout the next three centuries. The Tudor and Stuart plantations in Ireland had produced an impoverished Catholic gentry that were willing to recompense themselves in the Americas by the Seventeenth century.⁶¹ At this time, the Caribbean region saw an influx of Irish peoples. Rogers states that this “became the age of Irish servant, in which the indentured, the free and the transported merge in the popular memory of the ‘white slaves’”⁶²; it is important to note that the notion of the “white slave” is not to be conflated with the experience of African slaves throughout this era. It would be reductive to assume the treatment of the two groups of transported peoples and their decedents underwent the same or similar experiences. Despite the colonial system based on race, the Irish failed to immediately benefit from their whiteness. The Irish, however, were able to prosper within a few generations.

The eighteenth century welcomed a more prosperous era, as the numbers of Irish peoples declined, a number became settlers on the British islands, such as Barbados, and were able to participate in the commercial expansion of the sugar and slave economy, achieving a degree of wealth. Observing the semantic similarities used to discuss the Irish experience in the Caribbean it is possible to assert that the early Irish settlers were subject to treatment that is synonymous with colonial practices: “plantation” and “indentured”. The language surrounding the treatment is provocative, however linguistic and semantic similarities are present. It can be noted that the Irish indentured peoples shared a similar experience to that of the indentured

⁶¹ Donnell, Alison., Maria McGarrity and Evelyn O’Callaghan, *Caribbean Irish Connections: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2015): 18.

⁶² Donnell, Alison., Maria McGarrity and Evelyn O’Callaghan, *Caribbean Irish Connections: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2015): 17.

Indian population across the Caribbean, namely in Trinidad, Guyana and Suriname. To examine the island of Trinidad alone, between 1845 and 1917 over 140,000 Indians migrated from the labouring classes of the Uttar Pradesh and Bihar regions of North India, and some areas in South India, under the system of Indian indenture. There is a lot of ambiguity that surrounds the system, this includes the recruitment process in India, which includes the uncertainty of the British role in the state of impoverishment in India during the 19th century which was a factor in the decision to migrate. It is also subject to debate whether or not the Indian peoples were fully aware of the nature and specifics of the contract and journey that they were embarking on. The conditions on board the ships travelling between India and Trinidad were cramped and unclean, often producing outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery which led to high mortality rates during the passage. Although the system was experimental during the first decades of inception, two consistencies can be noted: “immigrants were contracted for long periods with a single employer, and, there were penal sanctions for breaches of the contract.”⁶³ Upon arrival in Trinidad, (and similar destinations including Guyana and Suriname) the indentured immigrants were held for a period of quarantine before being assigned to estates for a three-year contract of service, which was followed by a two-year period of “industrial residence” to complete a period of five years. After which time, indentured persons would be granted a Certificate of Industrial Residence, certifying that the individual was no longer under indenture. However, in order to attain free passage back to India, individuals had to voluntarily re-indenture themselves for a further five years, or pay at their own expense. Despite the conditions of indenture, approximately ninety percent of the Indian immigrants decided to permanently remain in Trinidad at the end of their contracted indenture periods. Although this description focuses on Trinidad specifically, due to the limited resources available, it serves as an example of the treatment of indenture across the Caribbean region,

⁶³ Sherry-Ann Smith, “The Experience of Indian Indenture in Trinidad: Arrival and Settlement”, in Cruse & Rhiney (Eds.), *Caribbean Atlas*, <http://www.caribbean-atlas.com/en/themes/waves-of-colonization-and-control-in-the-caribbean/waves-of-colonization/the-experience-of-indian-indenture-in-trinidad-arrival-and-settlement.html>.

and the system that was similarly employed with Irish peoples. Shared history within the Caribbean and Ireland continues to the treatment of diasporic West Indian's and Irish in Britain in the post-war era, often grouped together struggling against the institutionalised racism and abuse that was prevalent in areas that experienced high levels of immigration.

Toward the turn of the century, Ireland hosted a new nationalist cultural revival. The movement came to be known as the Irish literary renaissance, and was characterised by a desire to understand Irish history which came to change modern Irish history. Standish James O'Grady played a formative role in the revival and published *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period* in 1878. The publication forms the first volume of a series of legendary histories, which shared Gaelic myth and history with a new generation of Irish nationalists. The illumination of Irish history bolstered the national pride simmering across Ireland, and from these beginnings the movement worked to preserve, renew and restore the Irish language where it had ceased to be spoken. Douglas Hyde, the first President of the Republic of Ireland and a distinguished Gaelic scholar, founded the Gaelic League which focused on the preservation of the Irish Language. Hyde worked toward untangling Ireland from English influence, to "de-anglicise" Ireland, its history, literature and consciousness. Hyde's 1892 appeal for the Irish to embrace the 'authentic' Irish-ness⁶⁴ begot many nationalist organisations throughout the next decade, which culminated in the formation of the Sinn Fein movement. It is this pride and interest in Irish nationalism that inspired the literary renaissance in Irish drama and poetry. The movement shifted attention to the poet and playwright William Butler Yeats, arguably the modern architect of the Irish literary renaissance. W.B Yeats and Lady Isabella Augusta Gregory formed the Irish Literary Theatre company in 1898, later contributed as one of many companies that would become the Abbey Theatre, Ireland's national theatre which was among the first national theatres in Europe. The Abbey Theatre became a space for the reimagining and reinventing of

⁶⁴ Hyde, Douglas. "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland", *Delivered before the Irish National Literary Society in Dublin, 25 November 1892*.

Irish national identity, culture, politics and drama. The Irish Literary Theatre published a “manifesto” for Irish literary theatre in 1897, in aid of raising funds for the project, which reads as follows:

We propose to have performed in Dublin, in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever be their degree of excellence will be written with a high ambition, and so to build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome and that freedom to experiment which is found in theatre of England, and without which no movement in art or literature can succeed. We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident in the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out work that is outside all the political questions that divide us.⁶⁵

The manifesto reveals both the ideals and values behind the company and their projects, and the areas in which they were imperceptive of the then current theatre scene. Despite the mixed attitudes towards Irish self-rule there was notable excitement and support surrounding the company and the “establishment of an indigenous Irish dramatic avant-garde, let by internationally noted personages”⁶⁶, which promised to counter the stereotypical Irish images abundant on the British stage.

The manifesto shares tropes of other cultural nationalist ventures in its allusion to an “ancient idealism found in pre-Christian Celtic past”⁶⁷; the “ancient past” referred to as “outside all the political questions that divide us” proposes a perhaps naïve or ignorant promise that the project and drama produced would exist outside of the Irish history that saw “centuries of racial, religious and economic segregation, prejudice and violence”. This erasure of Irish history was

⁶⁵ Luckhurst, Mary., ed. *A Companion To Modern British and Irish Drama 1800-2005*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2006): 91.

⁶⁶ Luckhurst, Mary., ed. *A Companion To Modern British and Irish Drama 1800-2005*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2006): 91.

⁶⁷ Luckhurst, Mary., ed. *A Companion To Modern British and Irish Drama 1800-2005*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2006): 91.

arguably favourable to the Anglo-Irish W.B Yeats and Lady Gregory, as this was a history that they particularly wanted to be disregarded by Ireland's Catholic majority.⁶⁸ The Irish Literary Theatre also produced celebrated peasant plays, that presented the idealised image of Irish rural life that were imagined and designed to represent the desires of contemporary movement more so than the ancient heroes of folklore and legend. One of the greatest dramatists of the movement excelled in the production of peasant plays was John Millington Synge, who represented rural Ireland in a stylised peasant dialect. The movement and the Abbey Theatre owe success to the interactions between "politics and art, playwrights and patrons, plays and players, individuals and groups"⁶⁹, and through the process of collaboration and interaction between art and politics the transformation of Irish dramatic culture began.

J.M. Synge's (1871–1909) *The Playboy of the Western World* has been a cause of controversy since it was premiered in January 1907 at the Abbey Theatre. J.M. Synge was a master playwright depicting rural scenes and the somewhat absurd struggle of these isolated populations. The play was met with riots fuelled by nationalists condemning the insulting language and unflattering representation of the nation, against the promised idyllic scenes of Lady Gregory and W.B Yeats' manifesto for the company and the theatre.

Ireland in 1907 saw itself as ready for self-rule and it expected its artists to promote the image of a steady, sober, self-reliant people. Instead, with *The Playboy of the Western World*, Synge gave them a play in which a village loon splits his father's head open with a spade, runs away, tells people he "killed his da" and is promptly installed as a hero by excitable women and drunken men.⁷⁰

The provocative language and uncivilised, unenlightened characters countered the notion that Ireland was civilised and an enlightened society ready for self-rule. Synge uses the form and

⁶⁸ Luckhurst, Mary., ed. *A Companion To Modern British and Irish Drama 1800-2005*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2006): 91.

⁶⁹ Luckhurst, Mary., ed. *A Companion To Modern British and Irish Drama 1800-2005*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2006): 88.

⁷⁰ Kiberd, Declan., "The riotous history of *The Playboy of the Western World*", *The Guardian*, 23rd September 2011.

style of a naturalist play, borrowing from his contemporaries across Europe, such as Ibsen, Zola and Chekhov. Once again, writing against the grain of an Irish theatre that is independent from British and European influence. Trinidadian playwright Mustapha Matura rewrote the play in 1984, and his distinctly Trinidadian version *The Playboy of The West Indies* transforms the Irish tale to the West Indian milieu, in which every image, reference and sign is translated to “reflect a West Indian reality”⁷¹. Matura sets his version amongst the sandy shores of Mayaro in the 1950s, twelve years before Trinidad achieved independence from Britain, thus also reflecting the zeitgeist and undercurrent of a nation preparing for self-governance. Literary and cultural movements were also key to Trinidad achieving independence, and the connections between prominent politicians, artists and intellectuals. As discussed in Chapter One, the Beacon Group were a collective of intellectuals that placed themselves in the political arena and worked towards breaking down the national dependence on British colonial standards. C.L.R James was an integral member of this collective, and his connections with Eric Williams, Trinidad’s first Prime Minister. C.L.R James’ book *The Black Jacobins* can be seen to have influenced Eric Williams’ scholarship and politics regarding the inception People’s National Movement. Synge’s narrative still dominates Matura’s modified play, and the plot works to reveal the same unflattering appearance of a pre-independent nation.

This chapter will also explore W.B Yeats’s poem ‘An Irish Airman Forsees His Death’ which meditates on life and death, and is a narrative from the perspective of the airman, Major Robert Gregory, documenting his final thoughts before being shot down by an Italian aircraft. Fred D’Aguiar took influence from W.B Yeats’s poem ‘An Irish Airman Forsees His Death’, in his play by a near identical name *A Jamaican Airman Forsees His Death*. Yeats’s speaker muses on his inevitable death, after enlisting in the First World War effort as a Gentleman Pilot, driven by his own private desire instead of nationalistic or peer pressures. D’Aguiar expands upon the

⁷¹ Sandra Pouchet Paquet, “Mustapha Matura’s *Playboy of the West Indies*: Carnival discourse on Imitation and Originality”, *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 5 no. 1 (August 1992): 85.

notion of confused loyalty or rather the impact of the colonial situation that is present for both Irishmen and Jamaicans, the poems form the basis and is transformed into a play that explores a young Jamaican man signing up to the Air Force in the Second World War under the guise of supporting the “mother country”⁷².

Language

Although this study is focusing primarily on Anglophone literatures, the texts under analysis exhibit the diverse dialects or vernacular found amongst postcolonial countries. D’Aguiar, Matura and Synge all use a range of techniques to portray the unique dialects of their characters, which can be considered as ‘alternative’ English language. Language is a fundamental structure in the struggle for post-colonial discourse as the process of colonisation arguably is, and begins with, language. “The control over language by the imperial centre— whether achieved by displacing native languages, by installing itself as a “standard” against other variants which are constituted as “impurities,” or by planting the language of Empire in a new place— remains the most potent instrument of cultural control.”⁷³ Frantz Fanon’s seminal study *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), explores the use of language as a means of cultural domination, within a colonial context. The chapter entitled “The Negro and Language” discusses the “basic importance” of language in the definition and identity of oneself within a wider cultural context. Through language the colonising power is able to isolate the colonised peoples and reject or deny their humanity unless they (the colonised) adopt the dominant language and culture. Gilbert and Tompkins discuss how the use of “pidgin and creole dialogues as a part of a culturally matrixed theatrical language further dismantles the authority of standard English”⁷⁴.

⁷² Brewster, Yvonne., (ed), *Black Plays 3*, (London: Methuen Drama 1995): 279.

⁷³ Carlson, Marvin A., *Speaking in Tongues: Languages at Play in the Theatre*, (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2006).

⁷⁴ Gilbert, Helen., and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, (London: Routledge 1996): 184.

Therefore, the use of ‘alternative’ English could be seen to be as tool to write or fight against the colonising powers that enforced English as the national language. It is important to note that “many varieties of Pidgin or Creole are discrete with their own lexical features and grammatical structures; hence they should not be regarded as ‘bad’ or inferior versions of particular imperial languages”⁷⁵. This section explores the language used within the texts under examination, investigating the use of ‘alternative’ language as a political tool against colonial oppression.

In the preface to *The Playboy of the Western World* J.M. Synge states that:

I have used one or two words only that I have not heard among the country people of Ireland, or spoken in my nursery before I could read the newspapers. A certain number of the phrases I employ I have heard also from herds and fishermen along the coast from Kerry to Mayo or from beggar women and ballad singers nearer Dublin.⁷⁶

However, James Joyce responded to Synge’s play claiming that it was written in “a kind of fabricated language as unreal as his characters were unreal”⁷⁷. While it is not possible to verify the authenticity of Synge’s use of language, it is worth noting that Synge saw English as the appropriate language for new Irish drama. As a consequence, “Synge was seriously attacked by his nationalist audiences who ‘could not embrace the new hybrid language which he was magnifying in its carrier, Christy’”⁷⁸. Ashcroft et al. stated that “language is one of the most basic markers of colonial authority”⁷⁹. In the case of Ireland, the colonising force of England imposing their master language upon their colonial subjects was an effort to seize control over

⁷⁵ Gilbert, Helen., and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, (London: Routledge 1996): 185.

⁷⁶ Synge, John Millington., *The Playboy of the Western World*, (London: Methuen Drama, 1983): 39.

⁷⁷ Synge, John Millington., *The Playboy of the Western World*, (London: Methuen Drama, 1983): 28.

⁷⁸ Nursen Gömceli and Allan James, “Hiberno-English and beyond in J.M. Synge’s “The Playboy of the Western World”: A Literary Linguistic Analysis of its Dramatic Significance”, *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, vol. 40, no. 1/2 (2015): 109.

⁷⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (Oxon: Routledge 1995); , *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (Oxon: Routledge 1995).

all aspects of life and existence. Ireland has a rich oral history, which when infiltrated by the master language “their beliefs and cultural memory, preserved by language, their geography, based upon naming, even their sense of identity and their subjectivity, now interpellated by the colonial discourse.”⁸⁰ A defining characteristic of the Irish literary renaissance was the importance of preserving the Irish Gaelic language and to produce new theatre written in this language. Synge’s choice to give precedence to English and overlay the stylised and heavy Irish dialect is arguably a political tool to further dismantle the authority of English language, as through the bastardisation of standard English it signifies a departure from colonial rule. W.B. Yeats and J.M. Synge share the use of English as the language of new Irish drama, and Edward Said comments on this in *Culture and Imperialism*: “Yeats is especially interesting here: with Caribbean and some African writers he expressed the predicament of sharing a language with the colonial overlord, and of course he belongs in many ways to the protestant ascendancy, who’s Irish loyalties were confused.... If not contradictory.”⁸¹

Throughout the nineteenth century English language became representative of the wider population and no longer reserved for the land-owning classes, and with the increase in emigration from Ireland to the United States of America, the value of Gaelic declined. Thus, the Anglo-Irish idiom that Synge presented was borrowed from this modified English language that is characterised by Gaelic syntax structure and speech habits, which is evident in almost every line of *The Playboy of the Western World*:

It’s that you’d say surely if you seen him and he after drinking for weeks, rising up in the red dawn, or before it maybe, and going out into the yard as naked as an ash-tree in the moon of May, and shying clods against the visage of the stars till he put the fear of death into the banhbs and the screeching sows.⁸²

⁸⁰ Carlson, Marvin A., *Speaking in Tongues: Languages at Play in the Theatre*, (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2006).

⁸¹ Said, Edward., *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Vintage 1994): 274.

⁸² Synge, John Millington., *The Playboy of the Western World*, (London: Methuen Drama, 1983): 58.

Synge employs the Gaelic syntax order, and paints a God-like image of Christy Mahon's father, drawing upon mythical images and heroic power to control and slay the man-turned-beast in an impressive act of patricide. Gömceli and James state that: "Synge's hero did neither speak a pure Irish, but a hybrid of English and Irish, nor was he representative of a true Irish hero who would arouse the nationalistic feelings of the Irish people and make them proud of their 'Irishness'"⁸³. Synge's critique of the language may have been a deliberate reflection of Ireland in a state of in between, thus represented in the hybridity of the language of his characters. However, when the nationalists were trying to remove the strangulation of English language and the English dominance, Synge's rebellious act to draw upon the combined languages holds a mirror up to the reality that Ireland had to form a *new* identity and not be able to miraculously transform back to the identity held prior to the colonisation and invasions.

Matura uses a Trinidadian dialect and writes the script with an almost phonetic approach, so that the cadence and pronunciation of the 1950s Trinidadian accent can be portrayed accurately. As in Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* the dialect also dominates Matura's version: "Ken: Nar. A had a cutlass. A just raise it up an drop de blade on de edge a he skull (*shows*) an he dead like a ripe mango, squash like one too, blood all over the place, an not a sound come outta him."⁸⁴ Matura's Trinidadian alternative to Christy is Ken, and the description of his "Ole Man's" death engages with the images familiar to a Caribbean audience. The images provide a vivid texture and sound that arguably reside within the Caribbean consciousness: "It is the definitive cultural ingredient. The vernacular reflects and transmits a complex network of thinking, feeling and behaving. It is not only authentic; it is a highly refined cultural resource that enabled Matura to transform Synge's Irish play into a West Indian one.... Like Synge,

⁸³ Nursen Gömceli and Allan James, "Hiberno-English and beyond in J.M. Synge's 'The Playboy of the Western World': A Literary Linguistic Analysis of its Dramatic Significance", *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, vol. 40, no. 1/2 (2015): 108.

⁸⁴ Matura, Mustapha., *The Playboy of the West Indies*, (London: Oberon Books, 2010): 22.

Matura recognises folk speech as a source of poetry and drama in itself.”⁸⁵ This vernacular or dialect as harnessed by Matura could be referred to as Nation Language: “Brathwaite refers to the English based creole of the Caribbean as ‘nation language’. He maintains that the nation language in some of its lexical features but not in its contours, its rhythms and timbre, it’s sound explosions”⁸⁶. Both Matura and Synge tap into a sense of national language (by using the hybridity of Anglo-Irish or through an accurate recording of Trinidadian dialect) that is rooted within an oral culture which is inherently suitable for art forms such as theatre⁸⁷.

Mustapha Matura’s version of *The Playboy of the West Indies* calls into focus the argument of imitation, mimicry and assimilation, despite every single image, character and reference being translated to fit seamlessly into Trinidadian culture. If we observe Synge’s Christy and Matura’s Ken and their parting words at the conclusion of Act One, we can compare the ways in which Matura uses Synge’s narrative:

The Playboy of the Western World

CHRISTY. Well, it’s a clean bed and soft with it, and it’s great luck and company I’ve won me in the end of time – two fine women fighting over the likes of me – till I’m thinking this night wasn’t I a foolish fellow not to kill my father in the years gone by.⁸⁸

The Playboy of the West Indies

KEN. Boy, even de rice bags feel like a copra mattress tonight. (*he lies down and wriggles*) Once a get de bag molded ter me body a go be out like a light. Well terday was a day an a half. A end up wit two women fighting for me company an a bottle boy work ter boot. A can help tinkin a was a real slow coach not ter kill me fadder ages ago.⁸⁹

Nearly line for line Matura translates the Irish tale into the richly Trinidadian narrative, and as

⁸⁵ Sandra Pouchet Paquet, “Mustapha Matura’s *Playboy of the West Indies*: Carnival discourse on Imitation and Originality”, *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 5 no. 1 (August 1992): 89.

⁸⁶ Gilbert, Helen., and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, (London: Routledge 1996): 186.

⁸⁷ Gilbert, Helen., and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, (London: Routledge 1996): 186.

⁸⁸ Synge, John Millington., *The Playboy of the Western World*, (London: Methuen Drama, 1983): 63.

⁸⁹ Matura, Mustapha., *The Playboy of the West Indies*, (London: Oberon Books, 2010): 35.

such the borrowing of Synge's play raises the issue of imitation and produces something highly original. Paquet suggests that "*The Playboy of the West Indies* is no slavish imitation of Synge."⁹⁰ To consider in detail the description of the makeshift bed that Christy/ Ken has been provided, it exposes the ways in which Matura has transposed each reference to the Caribbean. Synge's characters offer Christy a hay-filled sack for a mattress, which has been transformed into "rice bags" for Matura's Ken. The Caribbean playwright has preserved the socio-economic equivalent to the hay-filled sack, as well as placing the action in a somewhat remote or rural location, but made this detail culturally relevant. "Matura has the Carnival imagination it takes to shape Synge's play to the peculiar reality of Mayaro, a remote fishing village on the east coast of Trinidad in 1950, as opposed to the west coast of Ireland in 1900". Therefore, it may not be not be useful to ask in what ways is Matura's play is West Indian, and in what ways in Synge's play is Irish, but to question the ways in which they portray the transferable notions of myth and folk milieu.⁹¹

D'Aguiar also employs pidgin and creole language elements within the play *A Jamaican Airman Foresees His Death*. An example of this being the omitted words from the Street Vendor's speech that create a sense of the dialect spoken, and therefore gives an indication of class and the perception of the military involvement in Jamaica by a lay person. The 'alternative' English language is not written in the same detail as Matura in capturing the phonetics, but similarly uses non-standard grammar and syntax order to portray the nation language of Jamaica.

STREET VENDOR. Hey! Uniform boy! Them don't pay you? You trade in your tongue for you uniform? Lord! Put shoe on country boy foot and clothes on him back and him think him can walk on water. You shit don't stink? It's not the same cloth they wash and press and give you for uniform that came off the leper back!⁹²

⁹⁰ Sandra Pouchet Paquet, "Mustapha Matura's *Playboy of the West Indies*: Carnival discourse on Imitation and Originality", *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 5 no. 1 (August 1992): 86.

⁹¹ Sandra Pouchet Paquet, "Mustapha Matura's *Playboy of the West Indies*: Carnival discourse on Imitation and Originality", *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 5 no. 1 (August 1992): 86.

⁹² Brewster, Yvonne., (ed), *Black Plays 3*, (London: Methuen Drama 1995): 246.

Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, “a productive tension resulting from a multiplicity of languages and voices”⁹³ can be applied to the theatre, and is particularly lucrative when analysing post-colonial works. Marvin Carlson dedicates a chapter of his book, *Speaking in Tongues: Languages at Play in Theatre*⁹⁴ in which he discusses the application of heteroglossia to colonial plays and performance:

It might seem that, despite their heteroglossic origins, both pidgin and creole languages, when utilized for theatre purposes, might operate like more conventional “standard” languages, especially when they have become the “native” language for at least the majority of their audiences. Two qualities or potential strategies of such languages, however, keep them open to a distinctly heteroglossic development in the theatre: hybridity and code-switching. Code-switching is sometimes combined with hybridity, but involves a different sort of linguistic mixing.⁹⁵

Synge, Matura and D’Aguiar capture the heteroglossic nature of colonial and post-colonial nations, in which the colonial voice is mixed and synthesised with many others to create a new and vibrant language that can, and is used as a weapon to disconnect and write against the colonising power.

Structure

This section will explore the ways in which analysis of the form and structure aid the reading of the pairs of texts. Sandra Pouchet Paquet’s article, “Mustapha Matura’s Playboy of the West Indies: A Carnival Discourse on Imitation and Originality”⁹⁶, discusses the departures that Matura takes from Synge’s original and the ways in which this could be investigated through the famous Trinidad Carnival, a celebrated event inseparable from island life. Paquet’s notion

⁹³ Marvin A. Carlson, *Speaking in Tongues: Languages at Play in Theatre*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press 2006).

⁹⁴ Marvin A. Carlson, *Speaking in Tongues: Languages at Play in Theatre*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press 2006).

⁹⁵ Marvin A. Carlson, *Speaking in Tongues: Languages at Play in Theatre*, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press 2006): 113.

⁹⁶ Sandra Pouchet Paquet, “Mustapha Matura’s Playboy of the West Indies: Carnival discourse on Imitation and Originality”, *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 5 no. 1 (August 1992).

of “carnival discourse” is inclusive of cultural memory, the colourful aesthetics of Caribbean Carnival, and the structural phenomenon of carnival. Carnival discourse underpins this section of the chapter, to assess the representation of carnival in both Matura and Synge’s incarnation of the *Playboy*. Though Trinidad’s Carnival is not overtly written into the plot of Matura’s Trinidadian version, “it provides an aesthetic framework for the refashioning of Synge’s play.” (87) Paquet postulates that for Matura, and the wider Caribbean region, Carnival can be a presence within everyday life, an opportunity of “lurking menace” for people to live their “second life”, should the balance of carnival not be correctly weighed between community and the utopian magnetism of carnival. Matura’s *The Playboy of the West Indies* is a carnival masquerade in which “a drama of imitation and adaptation from which indigenous culture emerges refreshed and strengthened” (85). There is the sense of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque in Synge’s play in that a world has temporarily been upturned due to the arrival of a mysterious and murderous man. Trinidadian Carnival represents an opportunity for cultural regeneration and liberation, as outlined in the “Author’s Note” to *Play Mas, Independence & Meetings*:

Then there is Carnival. Basically, it is a festival that uses all the different racial influences to produce two days of colour, fantasy and music of unbounded imagination and creativity. On these two days, all social rules and status are overturned; the society has an identity crisis and emerges refreshed and strengthened (87)

This definition of carnival is closely akin to that of Mikhail Bakhtin’s discussion of the carnivalesque in *Rabelais and His World*. Much like the medieval carnival that Bakhtin unpacks, Carnival is a period of festivity that upturns social order, giving preference to the lower strata of life, where society can emerge renewed at the end of the carnival when the hierarchies return to their original positions. The structural similarities between Bakhtin’s carnivalesque and Trinidadian Carnival are evident in the progression from ‘rule’ to ‘misrule’ and the return to ‘rule’, this progression travels through the upturning of power, in which lower forms are elevated and higher forms are neglected, this applies to authority figures, religious figures and social behaviours. This structure is a phenomenon found in cultures internationally in both European, Caribbean and African carnivals and periods of festivities dating to pre-

Christian eras. Synge's *Playboy* follows this structure of rule, misrule and rule within the play, which is closely 'imitated' by Matura. The audience or reader is introduced to the characters' 'normal' life, in which Synge sets out the parameters for the misrule to take place: Peggy's father, representing the authority figure leaves and is absent for the majority of the play, and the opening establishes the transition from rule and the opportunity for misrule to ensue. Christy/ Ken's entrance throw the established norms into misrule, wherein the structures adhered to in daily life are obsolete. Christy/ Ken reveals that he has killed his father, and is met with celebration instead of the expected condemnation, as the world and its norms are turned upside down and inside out. It is this structural carnivalesque element that supports the aesthetics of the carnivalesque and Trinidadian Carnival that are present within the plays.

Bakhtin discusses the notion of the grotesque realism, or the grotesque body within his work *Rabelais and His World* and relates the grotesque body to death and birth, as well as an extreme body driven by primary needs (eating, drinking, urination, defecation and sex) within the concept of Rabelais's works. There is not a figure within either version of the *Playboy* that represents a wholly grotesque character, but rather all the characters appear to possess qualities of the grotesque. We can ascertain that the features of the grotesque body are evident in the characters' drives and desires as well as the setting of the play. The setting of the Rum Bar and the Public House (or Shabeen) could represent the desire for drinking in excess and drunkenness. Within this setting we see the advances made by the female characters towards the characters of Christy/ Ken, this sexual desire towards the (temporary) hero are two-fold, the overt sexuality of the females and their brazen advances destabilise or counter the patriarchy which supports the notion of passivity in modern courtship ritual. Lastly, the obsession and fixation on Christy/ Ken's attempted patricide highlight the elevation of the basal desires for degradation and death. This interaction between the body and the world within these grotesque features contribute to the carnival notion of degradation and renewal.

As previously discussed, both plays can be seen as a critique on imminent and recent independence, which is emphasised or perhaps more subtly put forward as the result of a nation

in flux, with an uncertain identity. Both Ireland and Trinidad are represented as nations with issues of “self-definition” and “self-discovery” on the cusp of independence from Britain. If we consider once again Bakhtin’s concept of carnival, in which there are no spectators, only participants, it could be postulated that the cultures of Ireland and Trinidad are also undergoing the degradation and renewing process of carnival. Thus, the issues of self-discovery of that unfold during the play are mirrored by the nation’s movement towards independence. In the play, Christy/ Ken arrives as a “degraded, beggarly figure” and his experience during the period of misrule redefine and reconstruct the character which has a permanent impact when the world returns to rule.⁹⁷

Mustapha Matura’s version of the Synge’s Irish classic share in the structure of the closely tied narratives but also in their dramatization of self-discovery through carnival. Synge’s play has many carnival elements that are shared and enhanced by Matura’s views on “the ideological, philosophical and aesthetic character of Trinidad’s carnival” (91), which is supported by Yeats’s theory of the mask as a means of finding “one’s antithetical self” (91). The notion of the mask is a common theme within post-colonial theory and literature, and is particularly prevalent in both versions of *Playboy* under analysis. Pouchet Paquet states that:

Matura wears Synge's fable like a masquerader wears a costume during Trinidad's Carnival. Isolated from its original context, the costume is tailored to fit the wearer and serve the occasion. The transformation is two-fold; the masque or costume is transformed by the player as it serves his need, and the player is transformed by the masque he assumes. (86)

Both plays share the framework of carnivalesque but with the inclusion of a Trinidadian carnival adding the explosion of culture and colour specific and unique to Trinidad. Matura is therefore not only “inspired by a ‘feeling of inferiority’ so much as by the exchange and re-

⁹⁷ Sandra Pouchet Paquet, “Mustapha Matura’s *Playboy* of the West Indies: Carnival discourse on Imitation and Originality”, *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 5 no. 1 (August 1992): 91.

exchange of ideas between groups that characterises post-colonial art in the new world”⁹⁸. To extend this notion of the mask of an ‘antithetical self’ we first must consider that the self, within the parameters of this study, as the reverse of colonial power, placing the mask-wearer as a colonial subject. The concept of the mask can be further explored through the application of Frantz Fanon’s seminal work *Black Skin, White Masks* in which he postulates that for the “black man there is only one destiny. And it is white”⁹⁹; this statement can be broadly applied to all colonial subjects, but it struggles to cross race boundaries to which the Irish are excluded. However, the sentiment suggests that the colonial subject aspires to attain the privilege of the white man – and thus be able to remove the mask. W.E.B Du Bois’s discussion of ‘double-consciousness’ in his work *The Souls of Black Folk* explores the idea of having two disparate but connected identities housed within one consciousness: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others... one ever feels his twoness... two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings.”¹⁰⁰ The theory of double-consciousness can be extended to the colonial situation of Ireland, and that is conveyed through the characters and the anti-colonial attitude captured within Synge’s play. The Irish, similar to the African-Americans discussed by W.E.B Du Bois, both possess a divided sense of self and social identity.

The issue of divided identity is also present within W.B Yeats’s poem *An Irish Airman Foresees His Death* and provided the stimulus for Fred D’Aguiar’s subsequent play of a similar name. The common fate shared by the Irishman of Yeats’s poem and Alvin is underwritten by their shared desire to be involved in a war that does not benefit them directly, with only a thinly veiled loyalty to the “mother country”. D’Aguiar discusses his motivation to explore the poem in his notes on the text:

⁹⁸ Sandra Pouchet Paquet, “Mustapha Matura’s Playboy of the West Indies: Carnival discourse on Imitation and Originality”, *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 5 no. 1 (August 1992): 86.

⁹⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, (London: Paladin 1970): 9.

¹⁰⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1989).

Yeats's airman was an aristocrat who had his own private reasons for joining the malaise of the First World War as a Gentleman Pilot: 'A lonely impulse of delight', instead of the usual peer-group pressures, nationalist drives or ego urges associated with killing on a mass scale... I was fascinated with the notion of a similar impulse in a Jamaican working class man when it came to the Second World War. The colonial situation would still prevail for the Jamaican as it did for the Irishman

It is possible to apply the W.E.B Du Bois's theory of double-consciousness to the protagonist of the play and speaker of the poem, dictated by the dominant colonial mission during the World Wars. The ambivalent attitude towards the seemingly inevitable death are revealed in the last lines of the poem:

I balance all, brought to mind,
The years to come seemed waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death.

The language used in Yeats's poem takes the form of a dramatic monologue of sixteen lines that form four quatrains, which divide and develop the speaker's thoughts. The iambic tetrameter carries the poem's steady and balanced rhythm that echoes the Airman's balanced and resigned approach to considering death. Riede discusses the poem's language: "Breath, death's ubiquitous rhyming twin and symbolic opposite – and the vehicle of discourse as well as the signifier of life – appears here, as it did to Yeats's, Pearse and Connolly, as a petty thing."¹⁰¹

D'Aguiar took influence from the narrative of Yeats's poem but also the form of his play was "decided by the source for it, that is, a poem"¹⁰². The play employs all the modes of speech –

¹⁰¹ Riede, Austin., "W.B. Yeats's economies of sacrifice: war, rebellion, and 'wasteful virtue'", *Irish Studies Review*, vol. 19 no. 4, (November 2011): 406.

¹⁰² Brewster, Yvonne., (ed), *Black Plays 3*, (London: Methuen Drama 1995): 279.

prose, poetry, monologue, dialogue, song, soliloquy and chorus – in order to express the character's journey through the narrative. The play moves fluidly between the different forms, and punctuates the action; there are numerous examples of this throughout the play, but to consider briefly one instance of Scene Four.

The blessing, singing and launching of the bombers...

Priest (*To the tune of the hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers'*)

Fly this aircraft, fly it well
 Straight from here to Hitler's hell;
 When you're there be sure to tell
 What your guns can tell so well
 Tell the Nazis that they can smell
 Worse than all the dead in hell,
 Worse than any words can tell
 That's why your ammo speaks so well

The use of the hymn's melody, with the provocative and obscene language counters and perhaps builds on Sabine Baring-Gould's lyrics which promote the notion taken from the New Testament that the Christian is a soldier for Christ. However, this juxtaposition of the hymn and the Priest promoting soldiers for a bloody and violent battle creates a piece that involves many voices from within the play and a dialogue from the influences that contributed to the original piece. This instance of intertextuality is an example of the polyphonic nature of D'Aguiar's play, in which a tapestry is woven from the cultural, political and artistic voices that influenced the writer and allow the play to make a claim about Jamaica's past. Jamaica during the Second World War was a "colony that had emerged out of a slave society. This experience of forced migration, settlement and resettlement, and government from abroad"¹⁰³, thus D'Aguiar created a dramatic structure with fluidity, fracture, impositions and juxtapositions in order to reflect the complex Island history under exploration in the play. Although this play is not as closely related to its namesake as Matura's *Playboy*, the dialogue created with the predecessor is in some ways more intimate and direct than that of the closely

¹⁰³ Brewster, Yvonne., (ed), *Black Plays 3*, (London: Methuen Drama 1995): 279

paired *Playboys* in that the characters within the play are aware of, and acknowledge the poem within the play:

ALVIN. Wait, wait, wait! A book! A book? I hardly have time to read my gran's bible!

KATHLEEN. You can dip into it. Yeats would turn in his grave, though. Most of the really good ones are short. There's one about you.

ALVIN. Me?!

KATHLEEN: No, silly, about what you do.

*She points out An Irish Airman Foresees His Death. He reads it aloud.*¹⁰⁴

The act of overtly including the poem, and influence, of the play within the action foreshadows the Jamaican's fate, and engages with the poem and reminds audiences and readers the origin of the narrative. The play's structure is formed through the diverse forms of speech used by D'Aguiar, and the references to art and literature, as well as history and politics, although arguably Eurocentric, reflect the diverse voices of the Caribbean and acknowledge the literary tradition that has influenced the text.

Through the relationship with their prior texts, the rewrites and responses explore the texts relationship between Ireland and the Caribbean, and capture the shared experience of colonialism, and 'kinship' felt by poets and playwrights joined by the Atlantic, "where the tide moves between Ireland and the Caribbean, undermining a deterministic relationship between past and present"¹⁰⁵. The integral role of the Atlantic in the relationship between Ireland and the Caribbean is extended to its prominent position in the Pan-Africanism movement, as supported by artists and intellectuals such as Marcus Garvey and W.E.B Du Bois, whose work and influence is further discussed in the next chapter. The Atlantic represents the passage of both the slave trade and freedom, as discussed by Paul Gilroy in his book, *The Black Atlantic*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Brewster, Yvonne., (ed), *Black Plays 3*, (London: Methuen Drama 1995): 260.

¹⁰⁵ Gough, Kathleen M., "Polymorphous Playboys: Irish-Caribbean Shadow Dancing", *Modern Drama*, vol. 48 no. 4, (Winter 2005): 784.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*, (London: Verso, 1993).

Chapter Three

Approaches to The Canon

Approaches to The Canon

“The postcolonial writer cannot simply ignore his past, including an education in British and European literature. He must confront his “monsters” - both native and foreign - and learn to live with them in harmony, not fight against them in anger. When the postcolonial can accept his own monsters, including the dark memories of a colonial past, he can joyfully accept his present hybridity.”

- Irene Martyniuk, “Playing with Europe”

This chapter puts in dialogue two of the most influential writers that form the Western canon: Homer and Shakespeare, to assess the ways in which two particular rewritings, Aimé Césaire’s *A Tempest*¹⁰⁷ and Derek Walcott’s *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*¹⁰⁸, approach the canon, and to explore the ways in which the authors transform the canonical narratives in a decolonising mission. As the authors of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*¹⁰⁹ have argued:

The subversion of a canon is not simply a matter of replacing one set of texts with another. This would be radically to simplify what is implicit in the idea of canonicity itself. A canon is not a body of texts *per se*, but rather a set of reading practices (the enactment of innumerable individual and community assumptions, for example about genre, about literature, and even about writing). These reading practices, in their turn, are resident in institutional structures, such as education curricula and publishing networks.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, trans. Phillip Crispin, (London: Oberon Modern Plays 2000).

¹⁰⁸ Derek Walcott, *The Odyssey: A stage version*, (London: Faber and Faber 1993).

¹⁰⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge 1989): 3.

¹¹⁰ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge 1989): 188.

The postcolonial texts work to subvert and shed new light on the canonical texts. Since the fifteenth century, Europe has collectively recognised Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*¹¹¹ as "Western" epics. These early poems and their master narratives have come to represent, and arguably are a foundation for an entire continent to define themselves, and are the formative epic for almost every country in Western Europe. Ralph Hexter notes that excluding the Bible, no other text "has been so influential through so many centuries as *The Odyssey*, as both a text and a direct source of characters and incidents"¹¹². To a lesser extent, the characters and narratives written by Shakespeare are repeated the world over in literature, art and music, and represent the basis for great literature across Europe and the West. This established canon was strengthened through the prescription of an imperial education across the colonised British Empire. Gauri Viswanathan commented upon the "valorisation of English literary study ... [as] an ideological content developed in the colonial context", speaking specifically of India he states: "British colonial administrators, provoked by missionaries on the one hand and fears of native insubordination on the other, discovered an ally in English literature to support them in maintaining control of the natives under the guise of a liberal education."¹¹³ Therefore, we can transpose the colonial treatment of India to the wider British Empire, where a colonial education remains the basis of the education system, namely within the Caribbean, as the focus of this study.¹¹⁴ Sam Selvon discusses the impact of the colonial education he received in Trinidad in the essay "Finding West Indian Identity in London"¹¹⁵ in which he recalls his childhood yearning for the quintessential English countryside:

There was also a feeling for the English countryside and landscape which had possessed me from schoolday reading of the English poets. In the hot tropical atmosphere I dreamed of green fields and rolling downs, of purling streams and daffodils and tulips, thatched cottages and quiet pubs nestling in the valleys. And I

¹¹¹ Richmond Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishing Inc. 1967).

¹¹² Irene Martyniuk, "Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott's Retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*", *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 190.

¹¹³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge 1989):3.

¹¹⁴ Exhibition at the Trinidadian National Museum, Port of Spain, concerning colonial education, visited 27th March 2018.

¹¹⁵ Susheila Nasta and Anna Rutherford (eds), "Tiger's Triumph: Celebrating Sam Selvon" (Dangaroo, 1995) [includes the essay "Finding West Indian Identity in London"].

wanted to see for myself the leafless trees covered with snow as depicted on Christmas postcards.¹¹⁶

These Western master narratives have come to be the defining texts that reflect what contemporary Europeans, and colonial subjects rely on as a cultural depiction of what they are and who they aspire to be, exemplifying ancient Greek standards of politics as well as the Homeric hero as a model for their own. “This is what W. B. Stanford called ‘the Ulysses theme.’ We should not be surprised that postcolonial writers, given the opportunity to create literary works during decolonization, should turn to the epic, a political genre,”¹¹⁷ and to the admired works of Shakespeare. Throughout the 1970s, academics, artists and authors moved to attack the canon and to question the authority bestowed upon the historic texts. As literary theory and critics began to move away from an aesthetic focus, it was further understood that all art must have political value. Other works begin to be studied and given privilege due to their political standpoint and not just based on aesthetic value.

Around the 1960s and 1970s, there was a move to reassess the canon from a more political standpoint and address silences and gaps that had hitherto not been examined in so-called works of art and literature. During this period, the very notion of a canon was beginning to be questioned.¹¹⁸ This reassessment of the canon invited alternative voices to counter the colonial narrative, to perform a “re-reading and the rewriting of the European historical and fictional record is a vital and inescapable task at the heart of the post-colonial enterprise”¹¹⁹. This chapter will explore the ways in which Césaire and Walcott approach the canon, investigating their response to the form and content of the canonical texts, and the ways in which they play with race, character and politics.

¹¹⁶ Nasta, Susheila and Anna Rutherford (eds), *Tiger's Triumph: Celebrating Sam Selvon* (Dangaroo, 1995) [includes the essay “Finding West Indian Identity in London”]

¹¹⁷ Irene Martyniuk, “Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott's Retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*”, *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 190.

¹¹⁸ Bill Ashcroft, “Towards a postcolonial aesthetics”, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 51:4, (2015)

¹¹⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge 1989).

Responding to Shakespeare

Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*¹²⁰ (1969), was premiered in 1969 at the Festival d'Hammamet in Tunisia, and has become a seminal postcolonial text which tackles one of the "earliest dualistic paradigms of Western and non-Western identity"¹²¹: William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*¹²². Césaire's rewriting interrogates this oppositional paradigm, and expresses one of the fundamental issues at the core of postcolonial literature: "the effects of place and displacement on both the colonizer's and the colonized sense of identity."¹²³ The staging of this concern works to give the colonized a voice, using the strategies common in postcolonial writing, including appropriation and syncretism.¹²⁴ Césaire's play has been subject to critical opinion that largely falls into two types of injudicious generalisations: that it is just another *version* of Shakespeare's play with ethnic overtones; others have concluded that based on an earlier statement from the playwright that the play was intended to comment upon the contemporary racial situation in the United States, and should be read allegorically¹²⁵. These generalisations, although not incorrect, limit the reading of the play to just these potential conclusions, and dismiss the ways in which Césaire's version has the ability to enlighten re-readings of Shakespeare's original. The traditional reading of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has emphasized the myriad virtues of the Prospero¹²⁶; the Duke Magician, and all the possible vices of Caliban;

¹²⁰ Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, trans. Phillip Crispin, (London: Oberon Modern Plays 2000).

¹²¹ Sam Vasquez, "The Deployment of Humour and Song in Asserting Black Diasporic Identity in Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*." *The Journal of Religion and Theatre*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (Fall 2005): 189.

¹²² William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Johnathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, (Hampshire: McMillian Publishers 2008)

¹²³ Sam Vasquez, "The Deployment of Humour and Song in Asserting Black Diasporic Identity in Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*." *The Journal of Religion and Theatre*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (Fall 2005): 189.

¹²⁴ Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, "African Animism, "Négritude", and the Interdependence of Place and Being in Aimé Césaire's "A Tempest", *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall 1996), 47.

¹²⁵ A. James Arnold, "Shakespeare and Césaire" Two Tempests", *Comparative Literature*, vol. 30. no 3, (Summer 1978).

¹²⁶ Critics have produced a myriad of studies that observe the virtuous and forgiving nature of Prospero. His growth throughout the play reveals his development, seen in his love for Miranda, the forgiveness of his enemies and superior magic powers.

the Monstrous Slave. However, Khoury states, “[this] reading presupposes that Shakespeare had nothing to say about the colonial attitudes of his day or that he did not or could not, philosophize about the relationship between these two.”¹²⁷ An often-overlooked irony, for example, is that Prospero was himself banished and uprooted from his Dukedom, just as he banished, displaced and uprooted Caliban. Césaire’s version is therefore far more complex than the traditional readings ascertain, and they fail to assess critically the relationship between the contemporary play to its Shakespearian model. *A Tempest* harnesses *The Tempest* as a tool to reveal the colonial narrative present in the original, by foregrounding issues of race, power and decolonisation the play indicates the struggles towards independence and racial equality that surround the contemporary political context. The difference between the playwrights, is the ways in which they problematized the colonial relationship, with Shakespeare writing for a strictly English audience, which at that time would have represented the ‘coloniser’, whereas Césaire was writing for both the coloniser and the colonised. Though there are significant differences in the ways in which Shakespeare and Césaire portray colonialism, there are “striking similarities in how they expounded the relationship of master and slave”¹²⁸.

Césaire has been hailed the “Prophet of Négritude”¹²⁹ by scholars such as Phillip Crispin, and his work should be considered against the philosophy of Négritude that he espoused, which had a great impact on the francophone black world from the 1930s onwards. Négritude is a framework of critique and literary theory that is formed of both a political and cultural project against colonialism. The movement was in line with the cultural and political movements led by scholars such Marcus Garveys and the ‘Back to Africa’ movement and W. E. B. Du Bois’s early efforts towards realising the concept of ‘Pan-Africanism’. The term Négritude derives

¹²⁷ Joseph Khoury, “The Tempest” Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire’s Shakespeare” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 23.

¹²⁸ Joseph Khoury, “The Tempest” Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire’s Shakespeare” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 23.

¹²⁹ Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, trans. Phillip Crispin, (London: Oberon Modern Plays 2000): 7.

from the French word ‘*nègre*’, a Gallic term equivalent of ‘negro’ used to denote dark-skinned, sub-Saharan or black Africans. While the word was used to perpetuate control and mistreatment, the movement appropriated the term, and this reclamation, as stated by Willoquet-Maricondi, “is designed to invoke a sense of belonging to an ethnic community, of being part of a specifically black African history, which had been denied to West Indians, like Césaire, by colonialism and slavery”¹³⁰. Négritude was influenced by Césaire’s friendship with Leopold Senghor. Senghor promoted the biological roots of the movement, whilst Césaire insisted on the cultural and historical notion of Négritude, which opposes the same biological conception that had been imposed by colonial forces. Césaire defended his position on Négritude, stating “I do not in the slightest believe in biological permanence, but I believe in culture. My Négritude has a ground. It is a fact that there is a black culture: it is historical, there is nothing biological about it.”¹³¹ At the time that *A Tempest* was written, over three decades after the inception of Négritude, black culture existed, and was fighting back against continued colonial mistreatment and exploitation, and racial tensions were at a height in the United States of America. The play is an example of how the movement is and was supported by a literary perspective and as a personal ethic, in an effort to ‘decolonise the mind’. Khoury summarises that “Négritude is not only the active attempt to reject racism, but also the active attempt to assert African heritage by resisting assimilation into the West by narrating the African culture to the west using the language of the west.”¹³² Césaire’s concept of Négritude began as an assertion of the uniqueness of black culture, however the philosophy has been universalised by Césaire to encompass all oppressed peoples; in order to explore the movement’s aims toward integration, reconciliation and harmony within society, the movement attempts to dislodge the authority language holds over both colonised and coloniser. Négritude emphasises integration,

¹³⁰ Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, “African Animism, “Négritude”, and the Interdependence of Place and Being in Aimé Césaire’s “*A Tempest*””, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall 1996), 49.

¹³¹ Joseph Khoury, “The *Tempest*” Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire’s Shakespeare” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 27.

¹³² Joseph Khoury, “The *Tempest*” Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire’s Shakespeare” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 27.

and Césaire's poetic and dramatic work stresses the importance for an interdependence between place and being, as an ideal future for the human relationships to each other and the world.¹³³ The notion of place and space in relation to being is a prominent theme in *A Tempest*, all the characters are devoid of proper ownership or belonging, either moved by force or usurped. Césaire explores this complex relationship between the characters and the space/ place they inhabit. Prospero is displaced from his European home, and as a result usurps power and ownership of the island from Caliban. This notion is continued and brought to the forefront in Césaire's version, although it does exist in Shakespeare to a lesser extent. The tripartite structure of Négritude's process which begins with a search for individual identity, which then develops to a wider racial identity and finally to a concern with universal experience. Susan Frutkin's investigation of the evolution of Négritude in *Notebook* tracks the transition from "the acceptance of oneself as black" to the rejection of Europe, and then to an emphasis on "universal fraternity"¹³⁴ This three-stage process is traceable in the structure of Césaire's revision, condensing Shakespeare's five acts to three, with the acts corresponding to the phases of Négritude.¹³⁵

Responding to the Epic

Derek Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* transforms Homer's epic poem, into theatrical form. The adaptation from the epic to the stage closely follows the Western master narrative, that audiences may have expected to see him debunk. However, the addition of a heightened tragic tone and the peripheral characters challenge the authority of the narrative, and casts

¹³³ Joseph Khoury, "The Tempest" Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire's Shakespeare" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 60.

¹³⁴ Joseph Khoury, "The Tempest" Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire's Shakespeare" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 57.

¹³⁵ Joseph Khoury, "The Tempest" Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire's Shakespeare" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 52.

Homer in a fresh light, commentating on the contemporary social and political concerns of the twentieth century.¹³⁶ Walcott's award-winning, and probably most famous work, *Omeros* refers to the Homeric epic, without being a straightforward retelling of it. *Omeros* is largely set in St Lucia, which was known as the 'Helen of the West Indies' on account – as was the case with Helen of Troy – of the number of naval battles that were fought over it. Through the eighteenth century the island changed hands frequently between the French and English who found its location favourable in relation to North America. Walcott was born and raised on the island of St Lucia, and this is reflected within the poem, converting the Greek archipelago for the Caribbean. *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and represents a differing approach to Homer's epic than that of *Omeros*. This later work shows great fidelity to the text of the master narrative, following the structure and characters closely. On the surface the stage adaptation does not challenge the original poem; however straightforward the retelling is, the play encourages audiences to reconsider both *Omeros* and Homer's *Odyssey* as part of a wider postcolonial project. Walcott complicates postcolonial discourse in accepting the commission of a fundamental Western master narrative from his former Empire, which has seen him come under fire from his own culture¹³⁷. Irene Martyniuk's discussion in "Playing with Europe: Derek Walcott's retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*", is helpful regarding the notion of writing in response to one's former colonisers: "Surely the acceptance of the Royal Shakespeare Company commission, no matter how prestigious or financially important to Walcott, did not help his Caribbean image. He explains: "I didn't want to do it because I didn't want to take on the idea of doing another—not a directly—Homeric thing like the book I'd just finished, but . . . I began to experiment with the idea of compressing some of the scenes into lines, and essentialising them . . ." ¹³⁸ Walcott

¹³⁶ Irene Martyniuk, "Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott's Retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*", *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 192.

¹³⁷ Irene Martyniuk, "Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott's Retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*", *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 189.

¹³⁸ Irene Martyniuk, "Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott's Retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*", *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 189.

subverts the master narrative through engaging with the underlying political nature of epics, stating that “any epic has a kind of political destiny” referring to his earlier work *Omeros*. The epic can be considered as a tradition passed through from Greece, Rome, and across the Christian world, thus the Caribbean and specifically the island of St. Lucia, recovering from centuries of colonial rule and uncertain identity, seems an unlikely subject for a nationalistic epic, and an unlikely heir to the epic tradition. “However, Walcott asks us to consider precisely this tradition in accepting a commission from his former Empire to rewrite one of their master narratives.”¹³⁹ Walcott himself has implicitly given myriad definitions of *epic*, but has recognised its political potential. Despite Walcott rejecting a political perspective and classification of *Omeros* as an epic poem, Walcott’s stage version shares much of the narrative with the original, thus cannot be exempt from the political perspective found within Homer’s original. To draw upon Martyniuk once more, she argues that “epics are more than just interesting and aesthetically pleasing: they help to form nations. “Poetry confers glory,” Gregory Nagy argues, on individuals in lyrical poetry and on entire communities in epics.”¹⁴⁰ *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*, taps into this power, and offers a narrative to assist the reforming of St. Lucia and similar Caribbean nations to build a national identity in the wake of colonialism. Walcott’s *Stage Version* had been commissioned by the RSC, suggesting Walcott’s audience be made up of the majority of English viewers, which is contrasting to Césaire’s explicit subtitle to *A Tempest* “a play for Black Theatre”. Walcott employs similar tools regarding race and class within the play, and engages with the assumptions surrounding these power dynamics within the play for a similar postcolonial project.

Walcott’s approach to Homer’s *Odyssey*, by relocating the characters, complete with Greek names, and their narratives to the Caribbean reveals the nature of the intertextuality between

¹³⁹ Irene Martyniuk, “Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott’s Retelling of Homer’s *Odyssey*”, *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 189.

¹⁴⁰ Irene Martyniuk, “Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott’s Retelling of Homer’s *Odyssey*”, *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 189.

Homer's poem and Walcott's play, which allows further debate surrounding the nature of the epic form. Walcott's play is not a reproduction of the poem for the stage, but a conscious remodelling of the politics and aesthetics present in the original. The relationship between authors and their texts can be considered to be symbiotic, both giving a renewed perspective to their counterpart, an example of "mutualism" to borrow David Cowart's definition, wherein both the guest text (stage version) and the host (Homer's original) benefit from the relationship. This 'mutualism' extends to the relationship between writers, and the ways in which influence can affect the reading or viewing of the narrative of the versions. It can be argued that it is more complex than a mere *chronological* concept, in which the two works exist isolated in their contexts, but rather as *simultaneous* concepts interacting and continually challenging each other. Walcott states: "if you think of art as a simultaneity that is inevitable in terms of certain people, then Joyce is a contemporary of Homer (which Joyce knew)" Walcott here is referring once again to *Omeros*, however, this provides an important assessment of his later stage work and some insight can be gleaned as to why Walcott would accept the commission from the RSC. Walcott perceives himself as an equal to Homer, and not below his predecessor¹⁴¹

Changing the canon: Race, Setting and Character

Césaire and Walcott approach the Western master narratives with similar devices that dislodge the canon, the overt changes to race and setting comprise the biggest deviations from the original text. Césaire signals his deliberate divergence from Shakespeare and simultaneously affirms his connection to *The Tempest* in the character list: "As in Shakespeare, two clarifications: ARIEL, a mulatto slave, CALIBAN, a black slave"¹⁴². This clarification seeks to assert an immediate divide between the characters, in the form of colonial ownership based

¹⁴¹ Irene Martyniuk, "Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott's Retelling of Homer's Odyssey", *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 190.

¹⁴² Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, trans. Phillip Crispin, (London: Oberon Modern Plays 2000).13.

upon race, the act of explicitly converting the racial identities of these characters allows the play to be read and be viewed as allegorical, it also works to ground the play within historical fact. These changes give a historical background to the island of Shakespeare's play, and transport the location from a fictional land; although the exact location is unspecified, the Caribbean region was historically under colonial rule. For Walcott, the alterations to the race of certain characters are perhaps more nuanced, and the changes do not feature as a caveat in the character list, but are conveyed through speech patterns and dialect. We can thus ascertain from the dialects that certain characters use that Walcott has written the majority of the serving characters, namely Eurycleia, Telemachus' nursemaid, as West Indian. This decision to adapt Homer's characters align the play with Western paradigms and models, in which black female characters form the servant class in colonial households. The following section will explore the ways in which the playwrights depart from canonical prior texts in order to foreground issues of race, social status and a de/colonialising mission. Both plays present a version of a colonial situation at the point in which a power shift is palpable. In Walcott's *The Odyssey*, the suitors pursue Odysseus's household to seize power and marry Penelope; *A Tempest* similarly presents the relationship between Prospero and Caliban contesting the rightful ownership of the island and its inhabitants. The playwrights adapt the canonical works to make space to explore the changing landscapes of former colonised countries.

Shakespeare created the character of Caliban as a highly intelligent, complex and resistant creature¹⁴³. Césaire expanded upon these qualities, made Caliban an unambiguous black slave, thereby accentuated the master/ slave relationship present in the original. Césaire was arguably "unabashedly Hegelian in his thinking"¹⁴⁴, and Shakespeare appeared to share such thinking *avant la lettre*, despite not been fully apprised of the colonial situation across the new world.

¹⁴³ Joseph Khoury, "The Tempest" Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire's Shakespeare" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 23.

¹⁴⁴ Joseph Khoury, "The Tempest" Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire's Shakespeare" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 23.

Appropriately, this study adopts a Hegelian line of thought in order to explore the implications of the relationship between Prospero and Caliban in the two versions. The notion of Hegelian Master/ Slave dialectic is taken from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*¹⁴⁵ in which he discusses the development of self-consciousness between two entities or parties. The dialectic explores the movement or motion of recognising, in which the master and slave are constituted each in being recognised by each other. Neither entity can exist or live without the other, they are symbiotic. Césaire's play examines this symbiotic Hegelian master/slave relationship, and invites discussion surrounding the allegorical transition from the existing symbiosis to a different form of relationship in a postcolonial world. As the coloniser, Prospero is in a position of power, not only due to his magical arsenal, but because of his "ability to produce a discourse that will have the status of truth"¹⁴⁶ Prospero's discourse effaces Caliban's identity in two ways, and his discourse is symbolic of that of wider colonial discourse, as a tool of oppression and enslavement. Firstly, the denial or erasure of Caliban's, and the entire island's history; and secondly, the act of imposing the name "Caliban". This relationship is a means to access an identity for both parties. Prospero requires a slave or colonial subject in order to assert dominance and power, to re-live the power he had previously held in his Milan dukedom. Conversely, Caliban's identity as a resistant and revolutionary character relies upon his status as a slave, and his ability to rebel against his master. The character of Caliban is aware that he is not able to physically destroy his master, but must engage or initiate alternative discourses to make his master recognise him as something "other than a slave; if not as an equal, at least deserving of dignity"¹⁴⁷. Césaire's Caliban understands that ultimately language and knowledge are power. Caliban responds to Prospero's imposed colonial education demonstrates his comprehension of such power games:

¹⁴⁵ Georg W. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1976).

¹⁴⁶ Joseph Khoury, "The Tempest" Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire's Shakespeare" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 25.

¹⁴⁷ Joseph Khoury, "The Tempest" Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire's Shakespeare" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006), 25.

PROSPERO. ... You might at least give me your blessing for having taught you to speak at all. A savage! A brute animal I educated, trained, dragged up for the bestiality that still festers all over him.

CALIBAN. That's just not true. You haven't taught me anything at all! Except to jabber in away in your language so as to understand your orders.¹⁴⁸

The speech here is similar to that of Shakespeare's Caliban:

CALIBAN. You taught me language; and my profit on't

Is, I know how to curse.¹⁴⁹

Despite the similarity, Césaire departs significantly here from Shakespeare, wherein Caliban is shown to not have possessed an intelligible language, and some critics suggest that the character may not have had language altogether, and thus the gift of intelligible language could be read as a gesture that elevates Caliban from beast to man. Césaire makes his Caliban speak a native language, whereas Shakespeare leaves the matter ambiguous. Furthermore, Shakespeare's Caliban displays his defiance through cursing Prospero in his own language, Césaire demonstrates how colonial language subjugates the colonised,¹⁵⁰ Caliban, by making it possible to understand the orders given by Prospero to complete the menial tasks, that Prospero is "too idle to do"¹⁵¹ himself. Ashcroft et al. argue that "One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language. The imperial education system installs a 'standard' version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalizes all 'variants' as impurities."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, trans. Phillip Crispin, (London: Oberon Modern Plays 2000): 23.

¹⁴⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Johnathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, (Hampshire: McMillian Publishers 2008): 36.

¹⁵⁰ Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, "African Animism, "Négritude", and the Interdependence of Place and Being in Aimé Césaire's "A Tempest"', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall 1996), 55.

¹⁵¹ Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, trans. Phillip Crispin, (London: Oberon Modern Plays 2000): 23.

¹⁵² Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge 1989): 188.

To examine the second eroding of Caliban's subjectivity we can investigate the act of Césaire's Caliban renouncing the name given to him by Prospero. The etymology of the name has been the centre of debate, and it is widely agreed by critics that the name is too unique to be meaningless; "it is too distinctive to be indifferently chosen, too important to be misleading"¹⁵³ Vaughan and Vaughan discuss the possible origins of the name in *Shakespeare's Caliban: A cultural history*, and although it is not possible to precisely trace the origins, nor is it perhaps relevant, we are able to ascertain meaning from many of the names Shakespeare gives his characters. The comedies feature many names that reflect the character's nature, for example, Mercutio and Benvolio (*Romeo and Juliet*) and Malvolio (*Twelfth Night*) reveal qualities of the characters, respectively a mercurial or volatile, good-willed and bad-willed. Similarly, in *The Tempest*, Prospero may be a derivative of the Latin *prosperare*, meaning to succeed or make fortunate. The etymology in these cases although not certain is highly plausible. The etymology of the name 'Caliban', however, is far more contentious, with critics failing to agree upon a meaning, other than sharing the assumption that Shakespeare "seized upon some word – a descriptive or ethnic label, or place name or foreign term – to signify Prospero's "savage and deformed slave"¹⁵⁴. Since the late eighteenth century, the popular explanation is that 'Caliban' is a deliberate anagram of the word "can[n]ibal", although the instances of anagrams may have been sparse prior to standardised spelling, there is evidence that suggest the practice was used amongst Renaissance poets and playwrights. "The case, briefly stated, is that consonants *l*, *n* and *r* are virtually interchangeable in European transliterations of the unwritten Caribbean Indian Languages; thus "calib" is tantamount to "carib" or "canib", and the latter is the acknowledged linguistic source of "cannibal". Thus, the simple rearrangement of the letters, an anagram or metathesis, produces 'Caliban'; this could reveal Shakespeare's choice of name is taken from the American Indian of an "unsavoury" sort. Although the word "cannibal" was

¹⁵³ Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996): 26.

¹⁵⁴ Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996): 26.

known to denote man-eating natives of the New World at the time of Shakespeare's writing, the attachment to the geography of the Caribbean also provides some explanation, due to the cartography available at this time, 'Caribana' was the common name given to the Caribbean and South American region. Shakespeare's designation of Caliban may have alluded to the region (the Caribbean) or his ethnic identity, as someone born or native to the Americas. The name might imply man-eating but this is by no means certain. All of these are plausible interpretations, but equally unproven. Modern readings assume the connection of Caliban with both the mysterious and savage New World, and the accepted rumours of flesh-eating natives that the link with cannibals provides. By designating Caliban's name, Prospero, in both Shakespeare's and Césaire's plays, seeks to maintain control of Caliban and the island. The name Caliban, like the language of the coloniser brought and enforced on the colonised, and of which the colonised have appropriated remain as a symbol of the process of colonisation. Césaire's Caliban takes *verbal* acts of rebellion and revolution against the colonial power of Prospero, a significant act being the renunciation of the name Caliban:

CALIBAN. Call me X. That's best. Like a man without a name. Or, more precisely, a man whose name was stolen. You speak of history. Well that's history, known far and wide! Every time you'll call me that will remind me of the fundamental truth, that you stole everything from me, even my identity! Uhuru!¹⁵⁵

The rejection of the name is a powerful revolt against Prospero, and is in line with Césaire's own revolutionary decolonising project, which promotes a non-violent approach. Caliban's speech makes the suggested colonial relationship of Shakespeare's play overt and unavoidable, the accusatory language evidenced in the repeated use of "stolen... stole" works to criminalise Prospero, as well as hold him accountable for the crimes of all the colonial projects across the world. The choice of the letter X as his new name is not without significance, relating to the political landscape across the United States of America and the momentum of the Civil Rights

¹⁵⁵ Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*, trans. Phillip Crispin, (London: Oberon Modern Plays 2000): 25.

Movement. “Césaire’s choice of the letter X is also an act of solidarity and fraternity toward other black liberation movements. As he explains, “My text, and that is normal, was greatly influenced by the preoccupations I had at that particular time. As I was thinking very much about a play concerning the United States, inevitably, the points of reference became American . . . [T]here is the violent and the nonviolent attitude. There is Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and the Black Panthers” (Smith and Hudson, 394).”¹⁵⁶ The solidarity is referenced once again in Act Two, where Caliban exclaims “Freedom now!” in English, which remains untranslated in the original French version. The African-American equivalent of the Swahili “Uhuru!” is used by Caliban during his interactions with Prospero. This word remains untranslated in both French and English versions and is another example of a deliberate defiant act to reject the colonising language. It suggests a far-reaching connection between all black people fighting for liberation, aligning the play and its subject with the Négritude movement discussed earlier in this chapter. Mazisi Kunene states that Négritude is essentially a “doctrine which asserts the Blackman as a man with his own culture, his own civilisation and his own original contributions. At one time or other all the black peoples of Africa or of African origin have been subjected to a system which denies them their cultural and intellectual achievements”¹⁵⁷. Thus, this is reflected in the Césaire’s support of the fraternity of all black peoples throughout the world. *A Tempest* adapts Shakespeare’s original to foreground the issues that face the nations fighting or recovering from colonisation. Césaire explores the dynamics between Prospero and Caliban and the ways in which their survival hinges on their ability to exchange relations of domination for adaptation and integration.

Derek Walcott similarly dealt with racial identity after Homer, as his play *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* complicates the colonial attitudes that can be traced in Homer’s text. Odysseus, in both

¹⁵⁶ Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, “African Animism, “Négritude”, and the Interdependence of Place and Being in Aimé Césaire’s “A Tempest””, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall 1996), 57.

¹⁵⁷ Aimé Césaire, *Return to My Native Land*, trans. John Berger and Anna Bostock, (Middlesex: Penguin Books 1969)

versions, as the King of Ithaca has a household full of servants and perpetuates a type of imperial attitude over land and sea through his pillaging adventures. Walcott's *Stage Version* aligns the action with the West Indian milieu, whilst maintaining Homer's characters and some of his plotting. However, the play "fundamentally changes their language, and in this way, fundamentally changes their race—a change that must be acknowledged on the stage."¹⁵⁸ Odysseus's household in Ithaca is presented in the familiar plantation model, in which members of the enslaved or colonised peoples have positions within the household. This model is also found in Césaire's *A Tempest* in which Ariel and Caliban are enslaved by the colonisers Prospero and Miranda. The aforementioned West Indian dialect crafted by Walcott signals to readers and audiences that Eurycleia, the nursemaid, is of West Indian origin; this choice would be reflected in the casting of the characters. Eurycleia is revealed to have been a loyal servant to Odysseus's household, and Walcott synthesises a non-specific Caribbean dialect in the speech of Eurycleia, a version of Creole or pidgin dialect, contrasting to the colonial 'standard' English employed by Telemachus and Penelope. Eurycleia's has an alternative pattern and syntax order that denotes the master-servant relationship. Ashcroft et al. comment upon the phenomenon of pidgin: "Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order', and 'reality' become established."¹⁵⁹ Walcott both affirms and collapses the audience's expectations of the relationships between the master and servant; the white characters that "easily represent the European traditions that must be overturned through subversive techniques of the once marginalized black islanders"¹⁶⁰. However, this reading simplifies a far more complicated manoeuvre performed by Walcott, as with *Omeros*, and in line with Césaire, Walcott does not simply reverse the European constructs in order to foreground issues of race,

¹⁵⁸ Irene Martyniuk, "Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott's Retelling of Homer's Odyssey", *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 191.

¹⁵⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge 1989): 7.

¹⁶⁰ Irene Martyniuk, "Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott's Retelling of Homer's Odyssey", *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 192.

but presents the colonial construct as disorganised and non-binary. Returning to the example of Eurycleia, her identity within the household is problematic:

PENELOPE. ... (*she breaks down. EUMAEUS enters.*)

EURYCLEIA. Not now, Eumaeus, a family crisis here.

EUMAEUS. Since when am I excluded from this family?

It is clear that both Eumaeus and Eurycleia perceive themselves as slaves within Odysseus's household and as part of the family, holding both positions simultaneously. Walcott complicates the expected binary of master and slave, and maintains the political agenda of the master narrative he is transposing. Language, and specifically pidgin or Creole, as a marker of hierarchy and relationship between the white and black characters, is continually challenged and manipulated by its speakers. Although the language may signify to the audience the native islanders as the "other", it also serves as a means of protection and safety from the colonial 'Greek' characters – the masters. The native West Indian characters manipulate their language as a means to disguise their intelligence and cunning to protect themselves from harm. Eurycleia adapts her speech to defend herself from Antinous, a persistent suitor, attacking her with questions about Athena, releasing her from his grasp when she exclaims "Me no see no sea cap'n, sir! Leggo me wrist!" (19) In earlier scenes, we can ascertain that Eurycleia is quite articulate in standard English, but masks her intelligence through the clever exaggeration of the island's dialect. This technique offers her temporary relief from the aggression targeted by the suitor, but ultimately does not afford any significant change to the power dynamics at work in the play, in most cases the servants remain the servants and the white characters remain a representative of the colonising powers. The suitors may also be seen as metonymic for the colonial attitudes that dominate Walcott's adaptation. They have invaded Odysseus's household in an effort to claim the prize of Penelope and rule Ithaca. Antinous is unjust, aggressive and forceful with the serving characters asserting dominance within their home. Thus, as Martyniuk states, "Walcott uses a typical trope—the false language of the servant or slave that hides an intelligence greater than the master's—but refuses to use it in a European

fashion. Island language may keep one safe, but it does not automatically make one a master.”¹⁶¹ However, when this technique is used by the wily and intelligent Odysseus, as in Homer, it reaps success and freedom. Indeed, Odysseus defeats the many challenges he faces during his decade long journey, and in the same way, through deception and disguise, will defeat the colonising suitors.

It is widely agreed by scholars that Homer’s *Odyssey* was composed and evolved through the oral tradition, and the cycling verses and dactylic hexameter suggest the narrative was intended to be performed rather than read. Oral tradition and storytelling are arguably crucial to the building of a national cultural identity, the stories with fable-like qualities inform behaviour and act as figures to uphold and aspire to. Frantz Fanon discusses his notion of national culture in *The Wretched Earth*, in which he states that “the oral tradition – stories, epics, and songs are now beginning to change. The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental.”¹⁶² Fanon’s statement supports the concept that the epic form, and the master narrative that is carried within it, is a crucial factor in the forming of a national culture: as important as *The Odyssey* was to the consciousness of the Western world, Walcott’s adaptation signals the importance of reassessing the epic to modern postcolonial audiences. Walcott also makes reference to another distinctly Caribbean oral tradition within his retelling in Scene Two:

EURYCLEIA. Nancy stories me tell you and Hodyseus.
TELEMACHUS. I believe them now. My faith has caught a fever.
EURYCLEIA. Launching your lickle cradles into dreaming seas.
TELEMACHUS. What were those stories? An old slave’s superstition?
EURYCLEIA. People don’t credit them now. Them too civilise.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Irene Martyniuk, “Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott’s Retelling of Homer’s *Odyssey*”, *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 193.

¹⁶²¹⁶² Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (Oxon: Routledge 1995): 155.

¹⁶³ Derek Walcott, *The Odyssey: A stage version*, (London: Faber and Faber 1993): 8.

Eurycleia's truncation of Annancy or Anansi to "Nancy stories", refers to the folklore popular across the Caribbean transported from West Africa. The character of Anansi is often depicted as a spider with varying human qualities, and represents the spirit of slave resistance and survival. The stories surround Anansi's ability to use his trickery and cunning to overturn his oppressors, inspiring and encouraging uprising in the confines of the plantations. Walcott's subtle reference to the rich oral history of the Caribbean works to counter the authority of Homer's epic, allowing another cultural history to be viewed parallel to *The Odyssey*. The character of Eurycleia, although mistreated by suitors and underestimated by Penelope, holds a great power over the men that rule Ithaca, providing their care and moulding their upbringing, and influencing their behaviour with the folklore she has passed to them. The qualities of Anansi can be evidenced within Walcott's retelling, and will be explored further later in this chapter.

Odysseus's encounter with Polyphemus is probably the most interesting episode in the play, with scholars paying extensive attention to this scene¹⁶⁴. Walcott remains faithful to Homer's version of events in his transposition of the encounter, but injects a thoroughly modern aesthetic. Walcott's *Stage Version* highlights the transition of power between Odysseus and the Cyclopes, and presents the notion that the identities of the coloniser and colonised are unstable and fluid. Odysseus approaches the island with colonising intentions, and the primary aim to exploit the land and its inhabitants for the benefit of his crew. Richmond Lattimore's translation illustrates the colonial themes present in the ancient text, and it is possible for the contemporary reader to extricate the similarities between Odysseus, the sacker of cities, and the figure of Columbus the Discoverer.

While I, with my own ship and companions that are in it,
go and find out about these people, and learn what they are,
whether they are savage and violent, and without justice,

¹⁶⁴ Book Nine of Homer's *Odyssey*, and the interaction between Odysseus and the Cyclops, have been at the centre of scholarly interest; this dissertation predominantly engages with Martyniuk, Hamner and Hofmeister and their postcolonial approaches to the scene. However, the myth of Polyphemus and Odysseus continues to be a source of scholarly, and popular debate.

or hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly ¹⁶⁵

In these lines, the language used to describe the potential of the islanders separates and elevates Odysseus and his crew from the native “strangers”, the unskilled, uncivilised peoples, that have not learnt to farm or build due to the fate of the immortal Gods favouring their land. Walcott’s Odysseus also occupies the role of the coloniser, and his crewmembers verbally bully the first native they encounter, “Listen, buzz off!”¹⁶⁶. This version foregrounds the difference between the invading crew and the native islanders. Odysseus’s is the “normal” character, white and powerful, compared to the unnatural, cannibal Cyclops, and he asserts his dominance over the land, claiming ownership and demanding control: “is this the Greece that I loved? Is this my city?”. A significant departure from Homer, however, is the abundance of food and life on the island. Walcott plays into the savage, violent stereotype and sets this episode on a “grey, empty wharf”, littered with oil drums and graphic sheep carcasses hang from poles. This contrast from the fertile land of Homer’s play, to the stark dystopian wharf, evocative of Orwell’s *1984*, saturates the episode with political overtones. The contemporary references to the totalitarian rule of the “Great Eye”, extend the barbarian reign of Homer’s Polyphemus as a man-eating monster. Walcott presents the Cyclops as a colonial power ruling the inhabitants; as found in Césaire’s *A Tempest*, the Cyclops denies the history of the land, as proclaimed by the Philosopher: “With history erased, there’s just the present”¹⁶⁷, forcing the islanders into involuntary servitude. Walcott also translates the uncivilised island to that of a country void of art and theatre, as the epitome of a civilised culture, to which the Philosopher attributes to the “era of grey colonels”¹⁶⁸, authoritarian militants that enslave the peoples. Thus, Walcott’s acutely political approach to the interaction with Polyphemus quickly shifts Odysseus from his position of master to slave to the monstrous Cyclops, the native “becomes the agent of power

¹⁶⁵ Richmond Lattimore, *The Odyssey of Homer*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishing Inc. 1967).141, lines 172-176.

¹⁶⁶ Derek Walcott, *The Odyssey: A stage version*, (London: Faber and Faber 1993): 60.

¹⁶⁷ Derek Walcott, *The Odyssey: A stage version*, (London: Faber and Faber 1993): 61.

¹⁶⁸ Derek Walcott, *The Odyssey: A stage version*, (London: Faber and Faber 1993): 62.

and the invaders are placed in the role of servitude.” Although, this scenario does not provide an exact replication of the British imperial framework, the power dynamics at play between Polyphemus and Odysseus are akin to that of the colonial dynamics of master and slave.¹⁶⁹

Odysseus must harness the same tools as his subjugated peoples in order to receive his freedom from Polyphemus, by altering language, deploying the trickery learnt from Anansi and submitting to his oppressor. As Eurycleia adopted an exaggerated accent to release her from the hold of Antinous, Walcott’s Odysseus also modifies his speech to appease his coloniser, causing him to laugh until tears pour from his single eye. This act of adopting an accent, with markers that align with a “black, almost American”¹⁷⁰ dialect, Odysseus plays word games that not only afford him a disguise, but unbalances Polyphemus and humours him. Although Odysseus can mimic an accent and experiment in word play, he is not able to manipulate his speech to the extent Eurycleia is able to, he must invest further to possess the skill of his West Indian servants. As in Homer, Odysseus uses his cunning and trickery to coax the Cyclops into a false sense of security and ultimately escape his capture: scenes eight and nine depict Odysseus giving the Cyclops a false name, relinquishing his identity stating his name is “Nobody”, from “nowhere” going where he “doesn’t know”. Although this remains largely unchanged from Homer, we can draw comparisons to Césaire’s Caliban renouncing his identity in order to unshackle himself from Prospero’s reign, and thus it is the act of becoming Nobody that allows Odysseus the opportunity to blind Polyphemus and escape. However, Odysseus frees himself from his colonial oppressor and reclaims his name and identity “MY NAME IS NOT NOBODY! IT’S ODYSSEUS! AND LEARN, YOU BLOODY TYRANTS, THAT MEN CAN STILL THINK”¹⁷¹ an opportunity that is not offered to the black slave Caliban, to revisit the identity he possessed prior to Prospero’s arrival. Thus, it is perhaps problematic that

¹⁶⁹ Irene Martyniuk, “Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott’s Retelling of Homer’s Odyssey”, *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 193.

¹⁷⁰ Irene Martyniuk, “Playing With Europe: Derek Walcott’s Retelling of Homer’s Odyssey”, *Callaloo*, vol. 28 no.1 (Winter 2005): 193.

¹⁷¹ Derek Walcott, *The Odyssey: A stage version*, (London: Faber and Faber 1993): 72.

Odysseus is able to use the tools of the West Indian slaves and servants to achieve the freedom that cannot be granted to them. It can be postulated that in Walcott's adaptation, Odysseus owes his wit and cunning to the virtues of an Anansi figure, instilled by Eurycleia¹⁷², which manifests itself in the humorous "black dialect" which is maintained throughout Odysseus's interaction with his coloniser. As Robert Hamner argues: "whatever vestiges of original sources may be retained through Walcott's process of adaptation, each original is strategically altered by his West Indian Creole aesthetic"¹⁷³, and as such colour Homer's epic with a political grounding and postcolonial message. Walcott's version of Odysseus's adventure with Polyphemus complicate the assumed binary of coloniser and colonised, although Odysseus is certainly guilty of an imperialist mind-set, to one extent or another, he is both coloniser and displaced from his native Ithaca. The Cyclops, Polyphemus also occupies the power over his land, but he is a totalitarian oppressor. "Thus, as poles, Walcott's Odysseus and Cyclops are not pure opposites; ... Rather than casting either the colonizer or the colonized native as racial or cultural "Other," Walcott ... has made his Cyclops an "Other" which can exist within a single, "intact" cultural milieu, or as an aspect of an individual personality."¹⁷⁴ Walcott presents the roles of Homer's characters as unstable and fluid, whilst revealing the similarity of colonialism to the totalitarianism as already present in Homer's poem.

Frantz Fanon proposed that "the native intellectual used to produce his work to be read exclusively by the oppressor, whether with the intention of charming him or of denouncing him through ethnic or subjectivist means, now the native writer progressively takes on the habit of addressing his own people."¹⁷⁵ This exercise is arguably demonstrated by both Césaire and

¹⁷² Robert. D. Hamner, "Creolizing Homer for the Stage: Walcott's 'The Odyssey', *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol 47, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 378.

¹⁷³ Robert. D. Hamner, "Creolizing Homer for the Stage: Walcott's 'The Odyssey', *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol 47, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 374.

¹⁷⁴ C. B. Davis, "'There Is No "I" after the "Eye"'-The Cyclops as Dramatized by Euripides and Derek Walcott." *Text and Presentation: Journal of the Comparative Drama Conference* 16 (1995): 36.

¹⁷⁵ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (Oxon: Routledge 1995): , *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, (Oxon: Routledge 1995): 154.

Walcott, writing for both colonised and coloniser, denouncing the authority of the Western canon. Both plays deviate from the master narratives they are drawing from, and create a space to explore the postcolonial landscape. Most significantly *A Tempest* fundamentally changes the outcome of Shakespeare's original, with Césaire's Prospero remaining on the island with Caliban, "even realising that the island is no longer comfortable for him, and believing that he and Caliban are now intertwined, they are part of each other, symbiotic."¹⁷⁶ *A Tempest* presents the crucial postcolonial issue of coexisting after independence, taking influence from the context surrounding the play's inception, but these issues also remain as a contemporary concern throughout the former colonised countries. The play is allegorical and despite Shakespeare's colonial fable, Césaire does not attempt to give or provide a moral answer, but instead offers a candid exploration of how master and slave can, or cannot evolve after independence. Similarly, Walcott's play is both an original retelling of Homer's epic, intermixed with postcolonial concerns depicted through his West Indian aesthetic, his *Stage Version* becomes more than a just a transposition of genre, from epic poem to stage drama, or a parasitic retelling¹⁷⁷. Both the original text and their retelling are symbiotic, like the relationships found within the text – they are not straightforward nor do they adhere fully to the assumptions about colonialism, but the retellings stand next to the text with equality and authority. The texts under analysis in this chapter write against the authority of the Western canon, as a colonising tool. However, they may be accepted into this canon, to be examined alongside the historic texts they have interacted and enhanced. The postcolonial retellings approach the Western canon with the weight of history, personal and national politics and hybridised culture that is woven into the plays, Césaire and Walcott recognise the complexities of Shakespeare and Homer, which allowed them to write their versions, which in turn allows

¹⁷⁶ Joseph Khoury, "The Tempest" Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire's Shakespeare" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006): 35.

¹⁷⁷ As defined by Cowart in his extended study of literary symbiosis. David Cowart, *Literary Symbiosis: The Reconfigured Text in Twentieth-Century Writing*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993).

us to re-read the originals “in the light of new and ever-expanding world views, be they postcolonial, postmodern”¹⁷⁸; they continue to reflect the complexities of human relationships.

¹⁷⁸ Joseph Khoury, “The Tempest” Revisited in Martinique: Aimé Césaire’s Shakespeare” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Fall - Winter, 2006): 35.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The dissertation has employed terminology that often calls upon the prefix ‘re-’: *re*-write, *re*-vision, *re*-locate; in simple terms this indicates the action of beginning again, and starting anew. To return once again to the philosophy of Giles Deleuze and his concept of the repeating islands as “not one of creation but of re-creation, not the beginning but the re-beginning that takes place. The deserted island is the origin, but a second origin. *From it everything must start anew*”¹⁷⁹. Deleuze’s theory of re-creation underpins the focus of this dissertation: Caribbean postcolonial revisions. It is therefore unsurprising that postcolonial writers have chosen to engage with, and rewrite canonical texts in order to interrogate and restructure European ‘realities’ in postcolonial terms. The three intersecting geographies that organise this dissertation: Europe, Ireland, the Western canon, in dialogue with the Caribbean region, and the discussion that has followed has made clear that the relationship between the colonial canonical texts (*Jane Eyre*, *The Tempest*, *The Odyssey*) and the Caribbean rewriting, (*Wide Sargasso Sea*, *A Tempest*, *The Playboy of the West Indies*) is not only of influence and attack. This study has uncovered the multiplicity of complexities that surround the act of responding and writing back to the Empire. Chapter Two, *Ireland and the Caribbean* discussed the ways in which Ireland and the Caribbean region share a similar experience of colonisation, servitude and independence. This shared relationship to their colonial past is thus reflected in the literary history. The chapter’s exploration of ‘alternative’ language enlightens Mustapha Matura’s version of J.M Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World*¹⁸⁰ which drastically transforms the cultural aesthetic of the original, but preserves Synge’s unflattering depiction of a nation approaching independence, with Matura’s rewrite providing a critical illustration of Trinidad

¹⁷⁹ Lorna Burns, *Contemporary Caribbean Writing and Deleuze: Literature Between the Postcolonialism and Post-Continental Philosophy*, (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2012): 2.

¹⁸⁰ Mustapha Matura, *The Playboy of the West Indies*, (London: Oberon Books, 2010).

on the cusp of self-rule. Fred D'Aguiar's play *A Jamaican Airman Forsees His Death*¹⁸¹, expands upon W.B Yeats' poem, in which the issues of ambivalent identity and colonial dominance are shared. This affinity between the poet and the playwright is indicative of the kinship experienced between the two transatlantic nations.

Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry enlightens the cultural and literary implications of 'writing back' to the Empire, and the counter-discourse provides a significant insight into the debate surrounding the relationship between the Caribbean and Europe. Central to the discussion in Chapter One, *Re: Framing Europe*, is the ways in which Matura, Rhys and Cook achieve a successful departure from their prior texts. The dialogue created through the rewriting and response provides a commentary on the colonial exploits: Matura's relocation of *Three Sisters*¹⁸² transposes the provincial Russian Town of Chekhov's play and replaces it with Trinidad's capital city to explore the marginality of colonial spaces. What we can discover amid the analysis of Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry¹⁸³ is the cultural and literary implications that surround 'writing back' to the Empire. The hybridisation of the colonial texts amid the Caribbean aesthetics, culture and language destabilises the authority of the Western canon. This dissertation has made clear that postcolonial texts that rewrite, respond and adapt texts that form part of the colonial canon work to reclaim and reassert personal and national identity in a postcolonial landscape. The Caribbean texts analysed in this study engage with the prior text as a means to further the de-colonising mission, although the majority of texts investigated stress the importance of preserving national language and dialects, the texts do not promote a return to pre-colonisation, rather they emphasise that hybridity and syncretism are a necessary and inescapable feature of postcolonial society. Through the analysis of each pair of texts, and the cross-comparison of themes, structure and socio-political contexts, we can consider the proposed binary of *colonised* and *coloniser*, as complex and as such not dichotomous. This

¹⁸¹ Brewster, Yvonne., (ed), *Black Plays 3*, (London: Methuen Drama 1995).

¹⁸² Anton Chekhov, *Three Sisters*, trans. Julius West. (London: Sovereign Classics, 2012).

¹⁸³ Homi K., Bhabha., *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge 1994).

concept is perhaps decreasing in usefulness as the postcolonial project progresses. The boundaries of this dissertation limit the scope of this study, and the investigation of the Caribbean texts exclude the literature of the wider postcolonial world. However, this dissertation has created questions for further study, primarily the relationship between Ireland and the Caribbean remains largely underexplored; namely the emerging literary and historical connections between the Irish Literary Renaissance and the Caribbean contribution to the Harlem Renaissance provide an interesting approach for further study.

The postcolonial moment, as stated by Bhabha, is a 'transitory' site, "neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past"¹⁸⁴, which is epitomised by these postcolonial revisions, which present the de-colonising mission in transition, calling upon colonial texts to subvert, reclaim, and rebuild culture, language and identity.

¹⁸⁴ Homi K., Bhabha., *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge 1994).

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